



# The Role of Protease Cathepsin B during non-host HR

Eleanor Gilroy<sup>1,2</sup>, Eduard Venter<sup>1</sup>, Katarina Hrubikova<sup>1</sup>, Maria Holeva<sup>1</sup>, Ingo Hein<sup>1</sup>, Gary Loake<sup>2</sup>, Christophe Lacomme<sup>1</sup> and Paul Birch<sup>1</sup>

1. Scottish Crop Research Institute, Dundee, DD2 5DA, Scotland, UK

2. Institute of Molecular Plant Sciences, Edinburgh University, EH9 3JH, Scotland, UK

Email: eleanor.gilroy@scri.ac.uk



## Introduction

Programmed cell death (PCD) is a fundamental process in development and in responses to biotic and abiotic stresses. Caspase activities are involved in PCD in both animals and plants, although the genes encoding them are highly dissimilar. In addition, the cysteine protease cathepsin B has been demonstrated to act as both an effector and regulator in animal PCD, where it is implicated in relocalisation of cytochrome c from mitochondria to the cytosol. We demonstrate that cathepsin B is also required for PCD in a plant disease resistance hypersensitive response (HR). The bacterium *Erwinia amylovora* (*Eam*) induced a rapid non-host HR in *Nicotiana benthamiana*. The HR was preceded by a transient increase in cathepsin B activity and coincident early relocalisation of cytochrome C. These events and the subsequent HR were prevented by cathepsin B-specific inhibitors. Virus-induced gene silencing (VIGS) was used to confirm that cathepsin B was essential for *Eam*-mediated HR and showed that this HR was dependent on the ubiquitin ligase-associated protein SGT1. The requirement for cathepsin B in the HR reveals a structurally conserved cysteine protease in an ancient PCD mechanism shared by plants and animals.

## Cathepsin B-specific Inhibitors delay the HR

To investigate involvement of cathepsin B in the *Eam*-mediated HR, cathepsin B-specific inhibitors I (Z-FA.fmk), II (Ac-LVK-CHO), IV (CA-074 Me) and the broad cathepsin B, S, L and papain inhibitor Z-FGNHO-Bz were each infiltrated with  $10^6$  cfu ml<sup>-1</sup> of *Eam* into *N. benthamiana* leaves. In the absence of inhibitor, *Eam* elicited a visible HR by 24 hours post-infiltration (hpi). In contrast, infiltration of *Eam* in the presence of 1 mM of inhibitors consistently abolished or considerably delayed and reduced the HR.

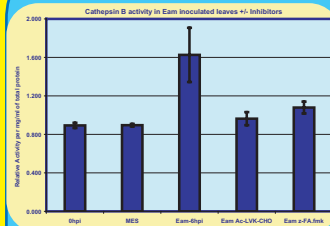
>Co-infiltration of *Eam* and mammalian cathepsin B-specific inhibitors can perturb the plant HR.

*N. benthamiana* leaves 4 dpi with  $10^6$  cfu/ml *Eam* +/- 1 mM inhibitors



## Inhibitors Reduce CathB Activity and Increase *Eam* Recovery

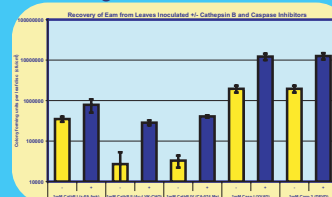
Cathepsin B activity in uninfiltrated *N. benthamiana* leaves (0), and 6 hpi with *Eam*, with the buffer in the presence of inhibitors, and with *Eam* containing 1 mM Ac-LVK-CHO or CA-074-Me.



>Cathepsin B activity at 6 hpi is absent when co-inoculated with inhibitors. This correlates with observed suppression of the HR.

In order to measure differences in bacterial growth, leaf discs were cut from *Eam* ( $10^6$  cfu/ml) inoculated with and without 1 mM Cathepsin B and Caspase inhibitors at 4 dpi.

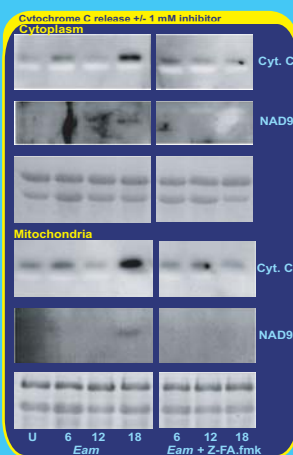
>Suggests a link between suppression of HR and the number of *Eam* recovered.



## CathB Inhibitor Perturbs Cyt. C Release from Mitochondria

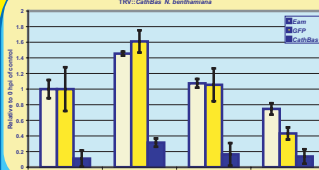
Western blots indicating presence of cytochrome c or NAD9 proteins in cytoplasmic and mitochondrial cellular fractions prepared from untreated leaves (U); leaves 6, 12 or 18 hpi with *Eam*; *Eam* with 1 mM Z-FA.fmk (Cathepsin B I) inhibitor. The same result was observed using 1 mM Ac-LVK-CHO (Cathepsin B II) inhibitor. Equal loading is indicated by Ponceau staining.

>Cathepsin B-specific inhibitor prevents *Eam*-induced relocalisation of cytochrome c from the mitochondria to the cytoplasm.



## VIGS effect on Cathepsin B Expression and Protein Activity

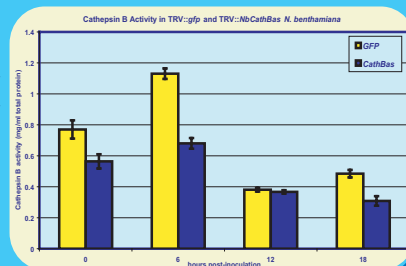
Expression of Cathepsin B in *Eam* challenged Wild type, TRV::GFP and TRV::CathB *N. benthamiana*



Relative expression of *NbCathB* in wild type or infected (TRV::gfp or TRV::NbCathB) *N. benthamiana* leaves that were untreated (0), or inoculated at 6, 12 and 18 hpi with *Eam*. >TRV::NbCathB plants have 80% reduced CathB expression 0-18 hpi with *Eam* compared to WT and TRV::gfp.

Cathepsin B activity in *N. benthamiana* leaves infected with TRV::gfp or TRV::NbCathB at 0, 6, 12 or 18 hpi with *Eam*.

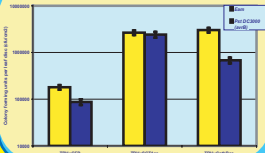
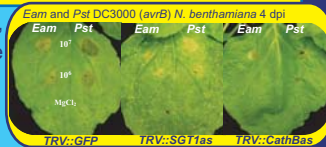
>TRV::NbCathB plants have reduced Cathepsin B activity at 0 and 6 hpi.



## VIGS of Cathepsin B on HR and *Eam* Growth

*N. benthamiana* inoculated with TRV::gfp, TRV::NbCathB and TRV::Nbsgt1 were infiltrated with  $10^5$  or  $10^6$  cfu.ml<sup>-1</sup> *Eam*.

>VIGS of *NbCathB* suppresses the HR



Leaf discs were cut from *Eam* and *Pst* ( $10^6$  cfu/cm<sup>2</sup>) inoculated VIGSed *N. benthamiana*.

>VIGS of *NbCathB* and *Sgt1* permits 10-fold greater bacterial growth 4 dpi.

## Conclusion

We propose that PCD in plants, as in animals, involves a cascade of interacting proteases, including cysteine proteases. Although caspase activities are involved in both plant and animal PCD, the genes encoding them are not similar. In contrast, the requirement for cathepsin B in the HR has revealed an ancient PCD mechanism executed or regulated by a cysteine protease that is structurally conserved in plants and animals.

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