Virulence of viral haemorrhagic septicaemia virus (VHSV) genotype III in rainbow trout -
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In general, viral haemorrhagic septicaemia virus (VHSV) isolates from marine fish species in European waters (genotypes GIIb, GII and GIII) are non- to low virulent in rainbow trout. However, a VHSV isolation was made in 2007 from a disease outbreak in sea farmed rainbow trout in Norway. The isolate, named NO-2007-50-385, was demonstrated to belong to GIII. This isolate has attracted attention to assess which of the viral genome/proteins might be associated with the virulence in rainbow trout. In this study, we describe the difference of virulence in rainbow trout between the NO-2007-50-385 and 4p168 isolates as representatives of virulent and non-virulent GIII isolates, respectively. Rainbow trout were bath challenged with VHSV NO-2007-50-385 for 1 and 6 h, resulting in cumulative mortalities of 5 and 35%, respectively. No mortality was observed in the rainbow trout groups immersed with the genotype III VHSV isolate 4p168 for 1 and 6 h. The viral titre in organs from fish challenged with NO-2007-50-385 for 6 h increased more rapidly than those exposed for 1 h. By in vitro studies it was demonstrated that the final titres of VHSV DK-3592B (GI), NO-2007-50-385 and 4p168 inoculated on EPC cells were very similar, whereas when inoculated on the rainbow trout cell line RTG-2, the titre of the non-virulent 4p168 isolate was 3-4 logs below the two other VHSV isolates. Based on a comparative analysis of the entire genome of the genotype III isolates, we suggest that substitutions of amino acids in positions 118-123 of the nucleo-protein are candidates for being related to virulence of VHSV GIII in rainbow trout.

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