

1 **Pathotype variation of barley powdery mildew in Western Australia**

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10 **Running Title:** Pathotype variation in *Blumeria graminis*.

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15 **Abstract**

16 Barley powdery mildew caused by the fungus *Blumeria graminis* f. sp. *hordei* (*Bgh*) has  
17 emerged as the most damaging disease of barley in Western Australia (WA). Many of the  
18 available cultivars display high levels of disease in the field when the climatic conditions are  
19 conducive. As a result, fungicides have become the main method of disease control in the  
20 last 10 years. Different types and sources of genetic disease resistance are available but to  
21 optimise their deployment it is necessary to evaluate the spectrum of pathotypes present in  
22 the pathogen population.

23

24 Sixty isolates of *Bgh* were collected in the 2009 season from 9 locations, single spored and  
25 characterised by infection on reference barley lines and cultivars, 18 unique pathotypes were  
26 collected. Virulence against many of the *R*-genes in the reference lines was present in at least  
27 one pathotype. Isolates were virulent against 16 out of a total of 23 resistance gene  
28 combinations. Undefeated resistance genes included the major *R*-genes *Mla-6*, *Mla-9*, *Ml-ra*  
29 and the combinations of *Mla-1* plus *Mla-A12* and *Mla-6* plus *Mla-14* and *Mla-13* plus *Ml-*  
30 *Ru3* and the recessive resistance gene *mlo-5*. There was significant pathotype spatial  
31 differentiation suggesting limited gene flow between different regions with WA.

32 On the basis of the results we recommend a number of strategies to manage powdery mildew  
33 disease levels within WA.

34

35 **Introduction**

36 Powdery mildew, caused by the fungus *Blumeria graminis* f. sp. *hordei*, results in major yield  
37 losses of barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) worldwide if uncontrolled. The disease is especially  
38 prevalent in moderate to temperate growing regions where yield losses can reach 40%  
39 (Chaure *et al.* 2000). Along with cultural practices, the main control measures are the  
40 application of effective fungicides and the use of cultivars with genetic resistance. The  
41 challenge for both breeders and growers is the capacity of mildew populations to evolve  
42 virulent new forms on resistant cultivars together with fungicide resistant pathotypes (Wyand  
43 and Brown 2005). Powdery mildew has a number of characteristics that support rapid  
44 evolution, such as large numbers of asexual haploid spores, sexual recombination during the  
45 growing season, and airborne dispersal over large distances. Consequently finding effective  
46 and durable control measures to constrain powdery mildew fungi represents an important  
47 challenge in crop protection research.

48

49 There are a large number of mapped resistance genes that could provide protection against  
50 barley powdery mildew infection (Czembor and Johnston 1999). These include major  
51 dominant *R*-genes, operating at a gene-for-gene level (Flor 1971), the major recessive non-  
52 race specific resistance gene *mlo* (Buschges *et al.* 1997) and less well characterised minor  
53 genes (Yu *et al.* 2001). The recessive resistance gene *mlo* has remained undefeated after 50  
54 years of use, but is associated with a yield penalty (Brown 2002). The use of major *R*-genes  
55 offers a rapid way to introgress resistance into current cultivars, but such resistance is seldom  
56 durable and is subject to a ‘boom and bust’ cycle (Hovmoller *et al.* 2000; McDonald and  
57 Linde 2002) when the pathogen population evolves via loss of the corresponding avirulence  
58 (*Avr*) gene. Such a strategy requires knowledge of the pathotypes of the pathogen present in  
59 the population. The introgression of a single *R*-gene is doomed to failure but introgression of

60 two or more *R*-genes, followed by pathotype surveys that detect virulence corresponding to  
61 the deployed *R*-genes, is potentially a viable strategy. As each *R*-gene is defeated, it must be  
62 replaced so that cultivars continue to carry one or more effective *R*-genes. As a first step in  
63 the process, the pathotypes of the population must be determined and monitored.

64

65 The objectives of this study were to i) determine the avirulence genes present in the WA *Bgh*  
66 population ii) determine which *R*-genes still provide protection against infection iii) assess  
67 the status of the *Bgh* resistant cultivars Dash and Barque iv) and provide a baseline of the  
68 frequencies of avirulence within the WA population for comparison in future surveys.

69

70

## 71 **Materials and Methods**

### 72 *Collection and Maintenance of Isolates*

73

74 Isolates were sampled from nine locations throughout the barley growing region of Western  
75 Australia; Perth, Medina, Katanning, Broomehill, Mt Barker, Albany, Boxwood Hill,  
76 Gairdner and Esperance. In total 60 isolates were collected from August to October 2009.

77 Tissue segments approximately 7cm in length were excised from infected plants and inserted  
78 into slopes of water agar amended with 50 mg.L<sup>-1</sup> of benzimidazole (Chan and Boyd 1992).

79 Conidia from each sample were shaken onto cv. Baudin grown under mildew free conditions  
80 using the tower inoculation method of Brown and Wolfe (1990) and maintained on

81 benzimidazole agar plates in a controlled environment 20±2°C subject to a 12:12h light: dark  
82 photoperiod. This process was then repeated with a single colony to obtain monoconidial

83 cultures. Isolates were subcultured onto cv. Baudin at 7-10 day intervals and shaken 24h

84 prior to use to dislodge old conidia and ensure fresh inoculum for infection.

85

86 *Inoculation of Pallas differential lines and W.A. cultivars*

87

88 Twenty three Pallas isolines (Kølster *et al.* 1986) and three current WA cultivars – Baudin,  
89 Barque and Dash were obtained from Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia  
90 (DAFWA), South Perth, WA. Seedlings were potted in grade 2 vermiculite and grown in a  
91 mildew free controlled temperature environment subject to a 12h fluorescent photoperiod at  
92 400 E.m<sup>-2</sup>sec<sup>-1</sup>. A single colony of each monoconidial isolate was used to inoculate the  
93 primary leaf of 10 day old seedlings. Leaf segments from each line were inoculated  
94 simultaneously using the settling tower method described previously and inserted into  
95 benzimidazole agar.

96

97 *Virulence and Pathotype Designation*

98

99 A five point (0 to 4) infection type (IT) scale was adapted from Czembor (2000) and used to  
100 assign a single infection type to each isolate/cultivar interaction 8 days post inoculation.  
101 Isolates that produced an infection type 3 or 4 were considered virulent. A selection of 16  
102 differential Pallas lines was used to distinguish and group isolates into pathotypes. A  
103 pathotype encompasses isolates with identical pattern of virulence on the differentials.  
104 Analysis was conducted using the HaGis : Spread sheet for Automatic Habgood-Gilmor  
105 Calculation V.3.1 (Herrmann *et al.* 1999) to generate descriptive collection site parameters  
106 (virulence frequency, number of pathotypes, virulence complexity, and abundance and  
107 diversity parameters shown in table 2).

108

109 **Results**

110 *Pathotype Complexity and Distribution.*

111 In 2009 eighteen unique pathotypes from 60 isolates were identified in WA sampled from  
112 nine sites (Figure 1, Table 1), of which fourteen had more than one isolate.

113

114 Insert Figure 1 and Table 1

115

116 Pathotypes 4 and 18 were the most abundant, encompassing in total eight isolates each and  
117 which showed virulence complexities of six and sixteen respectively (Table 2). Three  
118 pathotypes were found at more than one collection site whilst all remaining pathotypes were  
119 unique to their site of collection. The diversity parameters of the complete collection of  
120 isolates surveyed in 2009 are detailed in Table 2. The mean pathotype complexity, defined as  
121 the mean of virulence, per pathotype was 6.89. The most diverse sampling site was Mount  
122 Barker, from which a total of eight unique pathotypes were identified (Table 2). Virulence  
123 complexity of the pathogen collection (mean of the isolate complexity) was 7.98. However  
124 pathotype 18 collected from Esperance had a considerably higher virulence complexity of 15.

125

126 Insert Table 2

127

128 *Isolate Virulence Frequency and Complexity*

129

130 The frequencies of virulence of all isolates on 26 barley lines varied from 0% (no disease on  
131 7 lines) to 100% (complete susceptibility in lines P17 and P21 and to cv. Baudin). The *R*-  
132 genes that were present in the resistant lines were *Mla-1*, *Mla-A12*, *Mla-3*, *Mla-6*, *Mla-14*,  
133 *Mla-9*, *Mla-13*, *MI-Ru3* and *MI-ra* (Table 3).

134

135 Insert Table 3

136

137 There was no visible infection on the Pallas line harbouring *mlo-5*. The proportions of  
138 virulence were low to the resistance gene *Mla-23* (0.13) and to the combination of resistance  
139 genes *Mla-7* and *MI-LG2* (0.13), *Mla-10* and *MI-Du2* (0.13), *Mla-12* and *MI-Em2* (0.13).

140 The proportion of virulence to *Mla-22* (0.87), *MI-p1* (0.87), *Mla-t* (0.98) and *Mla-8* (0.98)  
141 were very high. The proportion of isolates virulent to the other *R*-genes ranged from 0.2 to  
142 0.73. Resistance genes were classified as effective (0% of isolates virulent) compromised  
143 (0% > 0.50% of isolates virulent) and defeated (0.50% > 1.00% of isolates virulent).

144 The virulence complexity of each pathotype was defined by the total virulence of each  
145 individual in the group. The lowest virulence complexity (3), with reference to the  
146 differentials lines used, was that of pathotype 11 represented by a single isolate. This isolate  
147 carried only *avr-a7*, *avr-aNo3* and *avr-a22* (Table 4). The highest virulence complexity (16)  
148 was found in a total of eight isolates in pathotype 18 *avra-7*, *avra-NO3*, *avr-LG2*, *avra-10*,  
149 *avra-Du2*, *avr-Em2*, *avra-22*, *avr-Ru2*, *avr-k*, *avr-nn*, *avrp1*, *avra-t*, *avr-g*, *avr-CP*, *avr-La*,  
150 *avr-h* and *avr-Ga* that corresponding to the postulated *R* gene in Barque (Dreiseitl and Platz  
151 2012).

152

153 Insert Table 4

154

## 155 **Discussion**

156 In 2009 the estimated average annual losses to powdery mildew in Western Australia (WA)  
157 were \$33M between 2000 and 2008 (Murray and Brennan 2010), but anecdotal evidence  
158 suggests losses have been far higher in recent years. In 2011, 1.55 million hectares of barley  
159 were sown in WA (ABS 2012) with the majority seeded with cultivars that are highly

160 susceptible or susceptible to powdery mildew infection. Baudin, a high yielding malt grade  
161 cultivar has been the dominant choice for growers for the past six seasons. This provided the  
162 perfect environment for the *Bgh* to proliferate, reaching epidemic proportions with losses  
163 estimated at \$100M in the 2010 and 2011 cropping seasons. In addition to yield losses, much  
164 of the diseased crop was downgraded to feed quality, resulting in a typical loss of \$200/ha.

165

166 At present there is a lack of high yielding malt grade cultivars with effective genetic  
167 resistance and hence fungicide application has been the main method of control. One  
168 economical and environmentally sustainable solution is to breed new cultivars with effective  
169 *Bgh* resistance genes. However, in order for this solution to be effective there is an absolute  
170 requirement for thorough knowledge of the virulence and hence pathotypes (isolates with the  
171 same patterns of virulence) within the target population. Virulence surveys of *Bgh*  
172 populations have been conducted in many countries around the world (Czembor 2000;  
173 Czembor and Johnston 1999; Dreiseitl 2008; Dreiseitl and Platz 2012; Hovmoller *et al.* 2000)  
174 but as yet the Western Australian *Bgh* population has not been extensively investigated. The  
175 Pallas near-isogenic lines used in this study were created by introgressing *R*-genes into the  
176 barley cultivar Pallas and are a set of 23 genetically near-identical lines differing only in their  
177 gene(s) for *Bgh* resistance (Kølster *et al.* 1986). By screening collections of isolates on the  
178 isolines the virulence present can be determined and hence one can ascertain which *R*-genes  
179 could be incorporated into future breeding programs for local *Bgh* control.

180

181 A number of cultivars are recommended to growers in the DAFWA 2013 barley variety guide  
182 (DAFWA 2012). Baudin is a sought-after malting variety and has remained one of the most  
183 widely grown for the past six years. It is very susceptible to powdery mildew infection which  
184 many believe has been the major contributing factor to recent epidemics. Trends predict that



185 the popularity of Baudin will now begin to decline as the costs of effective disease control  
186 outweighs any end point profits.

187

188 Buloke is beginning to gain acceptance in international markets as an alternative to Baudin  
189 (DAFWA 2012). With moderate resistance to *Bgh* it was more widely grown in WA in 2011.  
190 Buloke is thought to contain two *R*-genes, *Mla-7* and *MI-La* (Dreiseitl and Platz 2012). This  
191 survey indicates that both of these *R*-genes are compromised in WA. Recombination of  
192 virulent isolates or mutation would result in isolates capable of infection. Thus Buloke may  
193 be predicted to suffer from the well-established bust phase of the boom and bust cycle in the  
194 next few years.

195

196 Barque is a feed variety classed as resistant to powdery mildew. According to Dreiseitl and  
197 Platz (2012) this protection is provided by the presence of the *MI-Ga* resistance gene.  
198 Although not included in this survey, this *R*-gene is also found in cultivars such as Capstan  
199 (MS), Commander (MR-MS) and Fleet (MR-MS). The disease resistance ratings of these  
200 cultivars are given in parenthesis, indicating that at least some isolates in the WA *Bgh*  
201 population have mutated to *avr-Ga* and as such this resistance gene is also predicted to be  
202 compromised.

203

204 Dash is suggested to have the genotype *Mla-7*, *MI-k1* and *MI-La* (Dreiseitl and Platz 2012)  
205 and is rated as resistant to powdery mildew in Western Australia (DAFWA 2012). However,  
206 this study has shown that these resistance genes are compromised, defeated and compromised  
207 respectively. This implies there are no isolates tested in this study in Western Australia that  
208 have lost the corresponding *Avr*-genes collectively. Alternatively losing all three of these  
209 *Avr*-genes may impose a fitness penalty (Brown 2002).

210

211 Hindmarsh is accredited as a food variety and carries the *Mla-8* and *Ml-La* resistance genes  
212 (Dreiseitl and Platz 2012). *Ml-a8* provides no protection against *Bgh* and *Ml-La* is now  
213 compromised. This correlates with the cultivar's moderate susceptibility towards powdery  
214 mildew infection (DAFWA 2012). If the *avr-a8* + *avr-La* genotype increases in the WA  
215 population Hindmarsh's susceptibility could increase to match that of Baudin.  
216 Yagan has intermediate resistance to powdery mildew. This is governed by the presence of  
217 two major resistance genes, *Ml-Ch* and *Ml-ra* (Dreiseitl and Platz 2012). This study  
218 determined that *Ml-ra* still provides effective protection against *Bgh* in Western Australia; the  
219 *Ml-Ch* gene was not tested.

220

221 Our studies indicated that isolates carrying virulence to 16 out of the 22 single or  
222 combinations of *R*-genes studied herein are present in the WA population. Major *R*-gene  
223 breakdown has been observed in Europe but the extent in this study was surprising given  
224 WA's isolation (Brown 1994). Therefore we can predict that Buloke (and other varieties)  
225 will not provide long term resistance to powdery mildew. Therefore any strategy based on  
226 major *R*-genes must incorporate two or more of the following single *R*-genes *Mla-3*, *Mla-9*,  
227 *Ml-ra* and the combinations of *Mla-1* with *Mla-A12*, *Mla-6* with *Mla-14* or *Mla-13* with *Ml-*  
228 *Ru3*. Future surveys should be carried out to detect mutations to virulence. By testing the  
229 Pallas lines P01, P02, P03, P8b, P11 and P14 against a range of isolates, changes in virulence  
230 in the local population can be detected.

231

232 Experience from Europe suggests the best ways of achieving durable resistance is to use  
233 either *mlo* (Freialdenhoven *et al.* 1996) or combinations of minor genes. The recessive  
234 resistance gene *mlo* has remained effective for more than 50 years and is the mainstay of

235 mildew control in European winter barley plantings. The yield penalties associated with *mlo*  
236 lines are significant (4.2%, Kjaer *et al.* 1990) but need to be weighed against some  
237 productivity losses and the costs of fungicides. We therefore recommend that serious  
238 consideration be given to the utilisation of *mlo* in WA barley cultivars. One solution to reduce  
239 the pleiotropic effects of *mlo* may be the incorporation of durable minor resistance genes  
240 effective against different isolates (Yu *et al.* 2001). These genes only allow low levels of  
241 mildew development and are common in plants, and while few have been isolated, many  
242 have been described in barley (Aghnoum and Niks 2011; Jones and Davies 1985).

243

244 We discovered significant spatial differentiation for the *Bgh* population – the highest  
245 diversity was at Mount Barker whilst the Perth population was a distinct subgrouping. *Bgh* is  
246 a highly mobile pathogen (Wyand and Brown 2003) and so it was surprising to see such  
247 differentiation, which may reflect local cultivar selection pressures. This finding indicates  
248 the necessity to carry out field trials in several locations in order to accurately assess the  
249 cultivar resistance levels. Possibly the most promising result from this survey is the  
250 identification of resistance genes which still provide effective control of *Bgh*. The  
251 introduction of these and exotic genes into future barley breeding programs, along with an  
252 integrated fungicide regime, may allow the impact of *Bgh* to be ameliorated in WA.

253

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257

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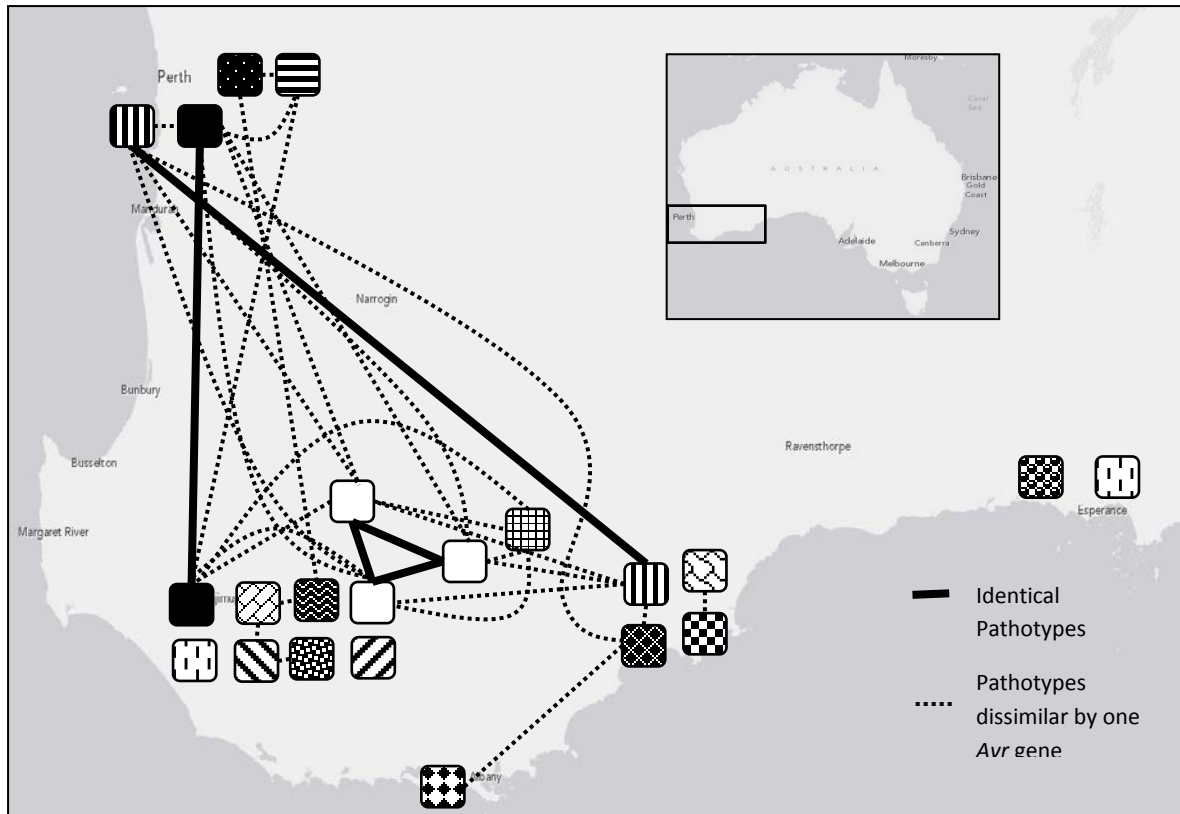
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- 338

Pathotype variation in *Blumeria graminis*



339

340 **Fig 1** Pathotype map of *Blumeria graminis* f. sp. *hordei* in Western Australia. Nine sample sites from  
 341 west to east are Medina, Mount Barker, South Perth, Katanning, Albany, Broome Hill, Boxwood Hill,  
 342 Gairdner and Esperance. Individual pathotypes are distinguished by patterned boxes. Identical  
 343 pathotypes are linked with a solid line. Pathotypes dissimilar by a single *Avr* gene are linked by  
 344 dotted lines

345

Pathotype variation in *Blumeria graminis*

346 Table 1. Diversity parameters of the *Blumeria graminis* f. sp. *hordei* collection from Western Australia  
347 in 2009. Mean isolate complexity is defined as the mean of avirulence genes present in all isolates.  
348 Mean pathotype complexity is defined as the mean of avirulence in each pathotype.

349

<b>Parameter</b>	
<b>No. of isolates</b>	60
<b>No. of pathotypes</b>	18
<b>No. of pathotypes with frequency &gt; 1</b>	14
<b>Mean isolate complexity</b>	7.98
<b>Mean pathotype complexity</b>	6.89
<b>Diversity - Simple</b>	0.30
<b>Richness - Gleason</b>	4.15
<b>Diversity - Shannon</b>	2.69
<b>Diversity - Simpson</b>	0.94

350

351

Pathotype variation in *Blumeria graminis*

352 Table 2. Complexity of the nine sample sites of *Blumeria graminis* f. sp. *hordei* in Western Australia  
 353 in 2009. Virulence complexity is defined as the mean of the avirulence genes of isolates collected  
 354 from each location.

Location	No. Pathotypes	Pathotypes	Average isolate virulence complexity
Albany	1	1	3.0
Gairdner	4	2, 3, 11, 12	4.0
Boxwood Hill	1	5	7.0
Broomehill	1	4	6.0
Mount Barker	9	4, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17	7.7
Katanning	1	4	5.0
Esperance	2	16, 18	15.0
South Perth	2	7, 8	6.4
Medina	2	3, 6	5.5

355

356



Pathotype variation in *Blumeria graminis*

357 Table 3. Differential Pallas lines, their genes for resistance to *Blumeria graminis* f. sp. *hordei* and  
 358 proportion of corresponding virulent isolates among Western Australian isolates collected in 2009.  
 359 An isolate was considered virulent with an IT of 3 or 4. Lines/resistance genes were classed as  
 360 effective (0.00% isolates virulent) compromised (0.00% > 0.50% isolates virulent) and defeated  
 361 (0.50% > 1.00% isolates virulent).

Line/ Cultivar	Resistance gene/s	Proportion of isolates virulent	
P01	<i>Mla-1 Mla-A12</i>	0.00	Effective
P02	<i>Mla-3</i>	0.00	
P03	<i>Mla-6, Mla-14</i>	0.00	
P8b	<i>Mla-9</i>	0.00	
P11	<i>Mla-13, MI- Ru3</i>	0.00	
P14	<i>MI-ra</i>	0.00	
P22	<i>ml-o5</i>	0.00	
P06	<i>Mla-7, MI-LG2</i>	0.13	Compromised
P09	<i>Mla-10, MI- Du2</i>	0.13	
P10	<i>Mla-12, MI- Em2</i>	0.13	
P13	<i>Mla-23</i>	0.13	
P24	<i>MI-h</i>	0.20	
P4a	<i>Mla-7, MI-k, +?</i>	0.25	
P4b	<i>Mla-7, Mla- No3</i>	0.38	
P23	<i>MI-La</i>	0.38	
P15	<i>MI-Ru2</i>	0.65	Defeated
P18	<i>MI-nn</i>	0.73	
P12	<i>Mla-22</i>	0.87	
P19	<i>MI-p1</i>	0.87	
P20	<i>Mla-t</i>	0.98	
Pallas	<i>MI-8</i>	0.98	
P17	<i>MI-k</i>	1.00	
P21	<i>MI-g, MI-CP</i>	1.00	
Baudin	<i>Mla-8<sup>1</sup></i>	1.00	
Barque	<i>MI-Ga<sup>1</sup></i>	0.54	

Pathotype variation in *Blumeria graminis*

	Dash	<i>MIa-7, MI-k1,</i> <i>MI-La</i>	0.00
362	<hr/> <sup>1</sup> Postulated by Dreiseitl and Platz 2012		

Pathotype variation in *Blumeria graminis*

363 Table 4. Virulence spectra of 18 pathotypes of Western Australian *Blumeria graminis* f. sp. *hordei*  
 364 isolates. The number of isolates in each pathotype are indicated in parenthesis.

Virulence (+) of the pathotypes to resistance genes and cultivar Barque.																
Pathotype	<i>Mla-7</i> , +?	<i>Mla-7</i> , <i>Mla-No3</i>	<i>Mla-7</i> , <i>Ml-LG2</i>	<i>Mla-10</i> , <i>MlaDut2</i>	<i>Ml-Em2</i>	<i>Mla-22</i>	<i>Mla-23</i>	<i>Ml-Ru2</i>	<i>Ml-k</i>	<i>Ml-nn</i>	<i>Ml-pl</i>	<i>Mla-t</i>	<i>Ml-g</i> , <i>Ml-CP</i>	<i>Ml-La</i>	<i>Ml-h</i>	Barque
1 (1)										+		+	+			
2 (2)									+	+		+	+			
3 (6)									+	+	+	+	+			
4 (8)						+			+	+	+	+	+			
5 (3)						+			+	+	+	+	+			+
6 (2)						+			+	+	+	+	+	+		
7 (5)						+		+	+		+	+	+			
8 (4)						+			+		+	+	+	+		+
9 (2)						+		+	+	+	+	+	+			
10 (4)						+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
11 (1)		+				+										
12 (1)		+				+										+
13 (3)		+				+		+	+			+	+			
14 (2)		+				+		+	+			+	+	+		
15 (1)		+				+		+	+			+	+	+		+
16 (4)	+	+				+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
17 (3)	+	+				+		+	+	+	+	+	+		+	
18 (8)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

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