

*Rapid molecular sexing of three-spined sticklebacks, *Gasterosteus aculeatus* L., based on large Y-chromosomal insertions*

**Theo C. M. Bakker, Thomas Giger,
Joachim G. Frommen & Carlo
R. Largiadèr**

Journal of Applied Genetics
Microorganisms and Organelles

ISSN 1234-1983
Volume 58
Number 3

J Appl Genetics (2017) 58:401-407
DOI 10.1007/s13353-017-0399-0



Your article is protected by copyright and all rights are held exclusively by Institute of Plant Genetics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznan. This e-offprint is for personal use only and shall not be self-archived in electronic repositories. If you wish to self-archive your article, please use the accepted manuscript version for posting on your own website. You may further deposit the accepted manuscript version in any repository, provided it is only made publicly available 12 months after official publication or later and provided acknowledgement is given to the original source of publication and a link is inserted to the published article on Springer's website. The link must be accompanied by the following text: "The final publication is available at link.springer.com".

Rapid molecular sexing of three-spined sticklebacks, *Gasterosteus aculeatus* L., based on large Y-chromosomal insertions

Theo C. M. Bakker¹ · Thomas Giger² · Joachim G. Frommen^{1,3} · Carlo R. Largiadèr^{2,4}

Received: 31 August 2016 / Revised: 5 March 2017 / Accepted: 2 May 2017 / Published online: 22 May 2017
© Institute of Plant Genetics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznan 2017

Abstract There is a need for rapid and reliable molecular sexing of three-spined sticklebacks, *Gasterosteus aculeatus*, the supermodel species for evolutionary biology. A DNA region at the 5' end of the sex-linked microsatellite Gac4202 was sequenced for the X chromosome of six females and the Y chromosome of five males from three populations. The Y chromosome contained two large insertions, which did not recombine with the phenotype of sex in a cross of 322 individuals. Genetic variation (SNPs and indels) within the insertions was smaller than on flanking DNA sequences. Three molecular PCR-based sex tests were developed, in which the first, the second or both insertions were covered. In five European populations (from DE, CH, NL, GB) of three-spined sticklebacks, tests with both insertions combined showed two clearly separated bands on agarose minigels in

males and one band in females. The tests with the separate insertions gave similar results. Thus, the new molecular sexing method gave rapid and reliable results for sexing three-spined sticklebacks and is an improvement and/or alternative to existing methods.

Keywords Fish · PCR-based sex test · Population · Sex determination

Introduction

Differences in ecology, physiology, morphology and behaviour between the sexes are described in many animal species (e.g. McPherson and Chenoweth 2012), raising the need for taking sex into account in scientific studies. However, sexing of animal species on the basis of non-invasive phenotypic traits is often not possible or time consuming, e.g. in early life stages or as adults in sexually monomorphic species. Molecular sexing methods have the advantage of overcoming these restrictions of phenotypic sexing. They are frequently applied in birds and mammals, which have relatively conserved genetic sex-determination systems (Bachtrog et al. 2014). Molecular sexing in birds is applied in a plethora of research areas, ranging from population, behaviour and evolutionary studies to sex ratio evolution and species mating system assessment, improvement of captive breeding programmes, managing of wildlife species, analysis of breeding strategies in commercial poultry to forensic studies (Morinha et al. 2012). In fishes, molecular sexing is less frequently applied, probably because they show diverse sex-determination systems (Bachtrog et al. 2014).

The three-spined stickleback, *Gasterosteus aculeatus* L., is a small teleost fish species that has been extensively studied from a behavioural and ecological perspective (Wootton 1976, 1984; Bell and Foster 1994; Östlund-Nilsson et al. 2007).

Communicated by: Maciej Szydlowski

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this article (doi:10.1007/s13353-017-0399-0) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

✉ Theo C. M. Bakker
tbakker@evolution.uni-bonn.de

¹ Institute for Evolutionary Biology and Ecology, University of Bonn, An der Immenburg 1, 53121 Bonn, Germany

² Computational and Molecular Population Genetics Lab (CMPG), Abteilung Populationsgenetik, Zoologisches Institut, Universität Bern, Baltzerstrasse 6, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

³ Present address: Department of Behavioural Ecology, Institute of Ecology and Evolution, University of Bern, Wohlenstrasse 50a, 3032 Hinterkappelen, Switzerland

⁴ Present address: University Institute of Clinical Chemistry, Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

Since the integration of molecular genetics in stickleback research (Peichel et al. 2001), the three-spined stickleback is recognised as a supermodel species for evolutionary biology (Gibson 2005; Barber and Nettleship 2010). Three-spined sticklebacks show a distinctive sexual dichromatism during the reproductive season (Wootton 1976, 1984), whereas they appear monomorphic outside the breeding season (Wootton 1976, 1984). Sex differences of non-reproductive fish have been described for example with respect to boldness (King et al. 2013), migratory behaviour (Cano et al. 2008), feeding mechanism (McGee and Wainwright 2013) and parasite load (Arnold et al. 2003). However, many sex differences in stickleback's behaviour and ecology might remain elusive due to the lack of a simple, rapid and reliable sexing method. *Gasterosteus aculeatus* has mostly a XY sex-determination system, with linkage group 19 (LG19) being the sex chromosome pair (Peichel et al. 2004; Ross and Peichel 2008; Urton et al. 2011). Three molecular sex tests for *G. aculeatus* have been developed. Griffiths et al. (2000) assessed sex-linked AFLP markers, while Peichel et al. (2004) found a sex-specific polymorphism in the 3'UTR of the isocitrate dehydrogenase (*Idh*) gene at LG19. Toli et al. (2016) developed a multi-marker assay based on a Bayesian update approach using genotype scores from three sex-linked loci, i.e. the *Idh* (Peichel et al. 2004), *Gasm6* (Natri et al. 2013) and *Stn190* loci (Peichel et al. 2001). Potentially, other tests may be developed from sex-specific microsatellites established by Peichel et al. (2001), Shikano et al. (2011b), Shimada et al. (2011) and Natri et al. (2013). The current molecular assays are, however, not perfect (see Discussion) and, thus, an alternative would be useful.

In the present study, we developed a new, simple, rapid and reliable molecular sex test for *G. aculeatus* and tested its applicability for various European populations.

Materials and methods

Study populations and species

An unpublished (Largiadèr et al.) sex-linked microsatellite Gac4202 (repeat (GA)₂₅, primer pair Alt-1 and Alt-2 (Table 1) was developed from a wild-caught fish of a three-spined stickleback population near Roche/Montreux, Switzerland (46° 26' N, 6° 55' E) (see Largiadèr et al. 1999 for details and procedure for microsatellite development). Variability at Gac4202 was tested using wild-caught three-spined stickleback fish of the Roche population, lab-bred F1 fish from wild-caught parents of a population from the Wohlensee (near Bern, Switzerland, 46° 57' N, 7° 28' E) (see Mazzi and Bakker 2003 for standardised conditions of rearing and maintenance) and wild-caught fish from a Dutch anadromous population on the island of Texel (53° 03' N, 4° 48' E).

Based on the complete 850-bp-long sequence of the microsatellite clone Gac4202, which was derived from a female fish, a molecular sex test was developed by amplifying a sex chromosome specific length polymorphism using the N1-1 and Alt-1REV primers (Table 1), i.e. a ca. 271-bp-long fragment on the X chromosome and a ca. 813-bp-long fragment on the Y chromosome, respectively.

The generality of the applicability of the sex test was tested with fresh or 97% ethanol samples of adult wild-caught fish from the following European three-spined stickleback populations: a pond population from Euskirchen near Bonn, Germany (50° 38' N, 6° 47' E), an anadromous population from the island of Texel, the Netherlands (53° 3' N, 4° 48' E) and a population from the slightly acid lake Loch Tormasad on the island of North Uist, Hebrides, Scotland (57° 33' N, 7° 19' W).

In addition to molecular sexing, the sex of all adult fishes was determined by inspection of the gonads.

Sequencing

Genomic DNA was prepared from muscle tissue following a phenol-chloroform extraction method (Sambrook et al. 1989). Primers used for the amplification of a region at the 5' end of the Gac4202 microsatellite that included two insertions on the Y chromosome were N1-1 and Alt-1REV (Table 1). PCR products of the X and Y chromosomal fragments were cloned using the Advantage PCR Cloning Kit (Clontech), following the instructions of the manufacturer. Sequencing of cloned PCR fragments encompassing the Y- and X- chromosomal amplification products of several females and males of the three above-mentioned populations (Roche, Wohlensee and Texel) was done in order to estimate the degree of sequence conservation in this region. Cloning and DNA sequencing was done following Largiadèr et al. (1999) and Heckel et al. (2002).

Sex test

Genomic DNA was prepared from whole animals (juveniles) or dorsal spines (adults) according to a Chelex resin (Bio-Rad) extraction protocol (Estoup et al. 1993). PCR amplifications were done in a 10 µL volume using a thermocycler (T1 Thermoblock, Biometra). Each reaction contained 2 µL DNA extraction, 0.3 µL of each primer (10 pmol/µL), 0.05 µL Taq polymerase (5 u/µL), 0.2 µL dNTPs (10 mM), 1 µL buffer YS (10×), 2.0 µL Enhancer Sol P and 4.15 µL distilled water. The reaction conditions were: initial denaturation at 94 °C for 5 min, followed by 30 cycles consisting of 30 s at 94 °C, 30 s at 57 °C and 1 min at 72 °C, then a final extension cycle of 10 min at 72 °C, then cooled down at 12 °C. Amplification products were separated and made visible with ethidium bromide on 1.5% or 2% mini agarose gels, together with a DNA size standard (GeneRuler 50 bp or 100 bp DNA Ladder, Fermentas). Exact allele sizes were determined using a CEQ 8800 or CEQ 8000

Table 1 Sequences of the primer pairs (F: forward, R: reverse) to amplify insertion 1, insertion 2, insertion 1 + 2 and the microsatellite Gac4202

Primer pair name	Primer sequence 5'-3'	Amplified region	Position*
Alt-1	F: CGGGGCGATGGCAACGAC	Microsatellite Gac4202	1130–1147
Alt-2	R: CACGCGCCCTTTCCACTCAG		1300–1319
N1-1	F: CATTACAGAAGATGCATTGTTTCAG	Y-chromosomal insertion 1 + 2	330–353
Alt-1REV	R: GTCGTTGCCATCGCCCCG		1130–1147
N1-1	F: CATTACAGAAGATGCATTGTTTCAG	Y-chromosomal insertion 1	330–353
N2-1REV	R: ATCTCTGACACTCACAGGTG		809–828
N2-1	F: ACCTGTGAGTGTGTCAGAGATG	Y-chromosomal insertion 2	810–829
Alt-1REV	R: GTCGTTGCCATCGCCCCG		1130–1147

*Position of primer sequence in the alignment given in supplementary Fig. S1

capillary sequencer (Beckman-Coulter® GmbH) and 400 bp (Kit-400, AB Sciex) and 1000 bp (MapMarker 1000, BioVentures) sizing standards. Three sex tests were performed (Table 1): one covering both insertions on the Y chromosome (primer pair N1-1 and Alt-1REV), one covering insertion 1 (primer pair N1-1 and N2-1REV) and one covering insertion 2 (primer pair N2-1 and Alt-1REV).

Results

Microsatellite Gac4202

In the Roche and Wohlensee populations, the microsatellite Gac4202 showed a sex-linked inheritance: the Y-chromosomal band was invariably 185 bp long, while there was allelic variation on the X chromosome: 164 and 166 bp (and a null allele as deduced from a missing band on the X chromosome in some males and females) in the Roche population and 164, 170 and 172 bp in the Wohlensee population. So, males and females could be distinguished on the basis of the presence or absence of the longer Y-chromosomal band. The sex-linked XY inheritance was fully confirmed by comparing allele sizes at Gac4202 of adult progeny (163 females, 159 males; sex also determined by dissection) and their parents (24 females, 16 males) of the Wohlensee population. On average, 13.4 progeny (range 8–23) per cross were analysed. In the anadromous, genetically heterogeneous Texel population (Heckel et al. 2002), there existed more than 20 alleles on both the X and Y chromosome, with great overlap in allele sizes between the chromosomes. The complex band pattern did not allow sex identification on the basis of Gac4202. We, therefore, characterised a region at the 5' end of Gac4202 in order to develop a more universal sex test.

Y-chromosome insertions

Sequencing a region at the 5' end of Gac4202 revealed two insertions on the Y chromosome of males from the Roche,

Wohlensee and Texel populations (Figs 1 and 2, supplementary Fig. S1) compared to the X chromosome. The insertion closest to Gac4202 (called insertion 2) measured 238 bp, followed by a 89-bp-long region on both the Y and X chromosomes, and a second larger insertion (called insertion 1) of 307 bp. The insertions are well conserved, showing low variation among the ten cloned Y-chromosomal fragments of fish from three populations (SNPs and indels at maximal 13.2% of the positions, excluding polymorphisms based on ambiguous nucleotides: 6.4%; supplementary Fig. S1). The 12 cloned X-chromosomal fragments and corresponding regions on the ten Y chromosomes were significantly more variable, showing SNPs and indels at maximal 30.7% (minimum when excluding ambiguous nucleotides: 18.2%) of the positions (supplementary Fig. S1) (difference in SNP and indel frequency between inserts and others regions: G test, $G = 30.3$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$, and $G = 22.7$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$, respectively). SNPs and indels were present between populations and between sexes and also among individuals within populations. Finally, sequence variation was even detected among cloned fragments of the same individual, which can be explained by in vitro errors of the polymerase during PCR amplification. Thus, the observed sequence variation probably represents an overestimation. We can not, however, exclude the possibility that this intra-individual sequence variability may also point to the existence of multiple copies of these fragments in the genome.

Blast searches (Zhang et al. 2000) indicated high sequence similarity with a *G. aculeatus* whole genome shotgun sequence (AANH01001637.1; contig no. 1.001636) (Fig. 1, supplementary Fig. S1). This sequence is part of a draft stickleback genome (Jones et al. 2012) and is located on chromosome 19, which was identified as the X chromosome. Interestingly, the sequence has been derived from a single female individual (Jones et al. 2012), it lacks insertion 1 but not insertion 2, which is 3 bp longer (241 bp instead of 238 bp) than that observed for all cloned Y-chromosomal PCR fragments (Fig. 1, supplementary Fig. S1).

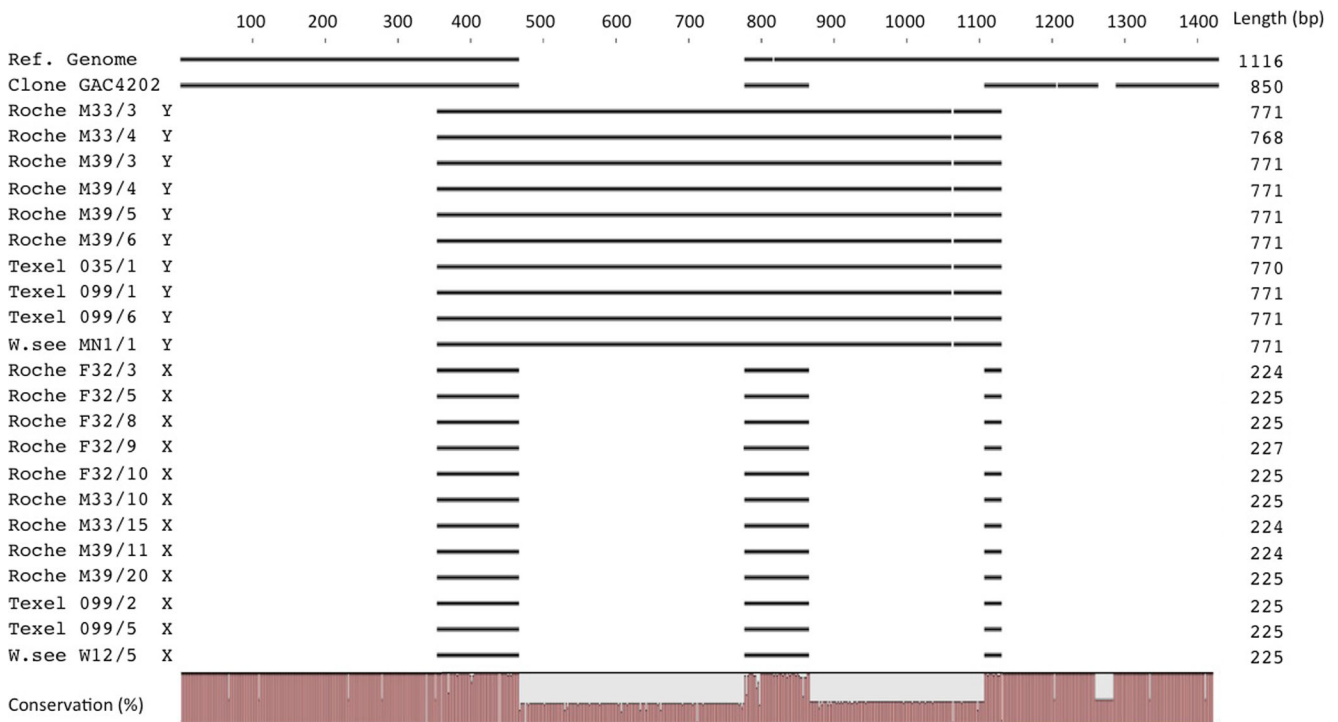


Fig. 1 Schematic representation of the sequence alignment of the cloned Y- and X-chromosomal PCR fragments with the *Gasterosteus aculeatus* (accession number: AANH01001637.1) whole genome shotgun

sequence contig no. 1.001636 and the microsatellite clone Gac4202 sequence. See supplementary Fig. S1 for a detailed alignment

The Y-chromosomal insertions offered simple molecular sex tests that produced two clearly separated bands in males and one band in females. Amplifying insertion 1 + 2 produced a ca. 271-bp band in females and both a 271-bp and a ca. 813-bp band in males, amplifying insertion 1 produced a ca. 190-bp band in females and both a ca. 190-bp and a ca. 497-bp band in males and amplifying insertion 2 produced a ca. 100-bp band in females and both a ca. 100-bp and a ca. 338-bp band in males (Figs 1, 2 and 3).

Applicability of sex test

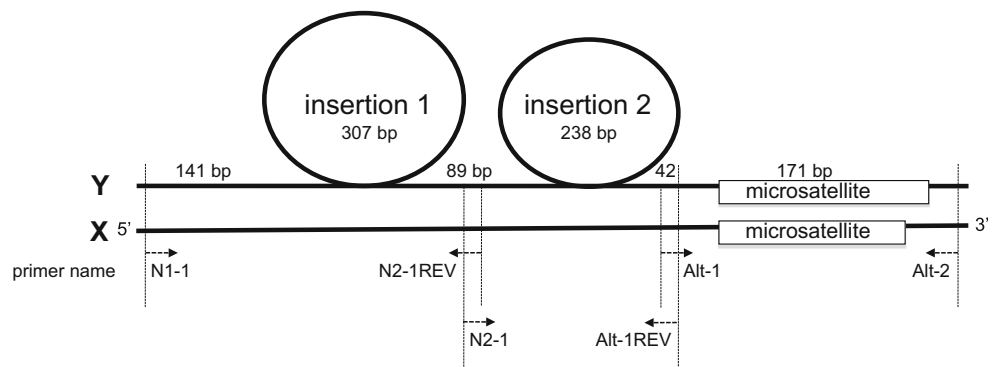
In all five European three-spined stickleback populations, the sex test involving insertions 1 and 2 gave unambiguous results: two bands in males and one band in females (Table 2,

Fig. 3). There existed some variation in allele size within and between populations on the Y chromosome and, to a more limited extent, on the X chromosome (Table 2).

Discussion

Crosses of three-spined sticklebacks from the Swiss Wohlensee population with different alleles at the microsatellite Gac4202 confirmed the XY sex-determination system that had been characterised by Peichel and co-workers (Peichel et al. 2004; Ross and Peichel 2008; Urton et al. 2011). By sequencing the 5' end of the sex-linked microsatellite Gac4202, we found two insertions of 238 bp and 307 bp, respectively, separated by 89 bp, on the Y chromosome of

Fig. 2 Schematic representation of two insertions on the Y chromosome at the 5' end of the Gac4202 sex-linked microsatellite in *G. aculeatus*. Indicated are sizes in bp, as well as the name of the primers used to amplify insertion 1, insertion 2, insertion 1 + 2 and the microsatellite



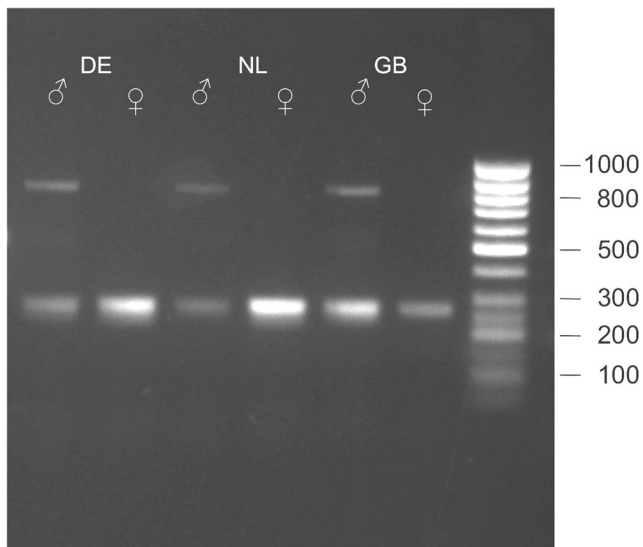


Fig. 3 Part of ethidium bromide stained agarose gel showing an example of sex tests based on insertion 1 + 2 with males and females from various European three-spined stickleback populations. DE: German population (Euskirchen), NL: Dutch population (Texel) and GB: Scottish population (Loch Tormasad). Each lane represents a single sample. ♂ and ♀ indicate male and female, respectively. The far right lane shows a 1000 bp size standard

the three-spined stickleback that were absent on the X chromosome (see also Peichel et al. 2004). The sequences obtained from this study mapped to the X chromosome 19 of the three-spined stickleback draft genome (Jones et al. 2012) in an apparently non-coding region. In comparison to our X- and Y-chromosomal sequences, the reference genome, which had been derived from a single female stickleback from Alaska (Jones et al. 2012), had a chimeric organisation possessing one of the presumably Y-chromosome specific introns. This may indicate a recombination event between the Y and X chromosomes in this population. Alternatively, there could be an insertion on the Y chromosome that is unique to the European populations sampled.

Amplification of the region containing the two insertions yielded a very reliable molecular sex test in different

populations: in over 50 fish tested of six stickleback populations, males yielded two well-separated bands, while females yielded one. The sexing was done easily and rapidly by PCR amplification of DNA of this region, followed by separation on an agarose minigel.

Our test adds to the molecular sexing tests in the three-spined stickleback. Molecular sexing is a powerful tool and has been applied in various research areas using sticklebacks, such as parasitology (Arnold et al. 2003), ecotoxicology (Hahlbeck et al. 2004; Bernhardt et al. 2006), ontogeny (Lewis et al. 2008), genetics (Stärner et al. 2004), endocrinology (Bell et al. 2007) and evolutionary biology (Lenz et al. 2009; Bell et al. 2011; Leinonen et al. 2011a, b; Loehr et al. 2012; Ramler et al. 2014).

Also, for the nine-spined stickleback, *Pungitius pungitius*, which is emerging as another stickleback model for evolutionary biology, genetic and behavioural research (Merilä 2013), a reliable sex-specific microsatellite has previously been developed (Shikano et al. 2011a). It had been applied by Shikano and Merilä (2011) in a comparative study on body size and vertebrae number.

Sexing was 100% reliable with our sex test (this study) and is, thus, more reliable than the molecular sex tests that had been developed for the three-spined stickleback thus far. Griffiths et al. (2000) also reached 100% reliability of their test in 53 fish from three three-spined stickleback populations. However, in a study of a Swedish population, the control band that should show up in both sexes proved not to be reliable, with variable reliability between broods (Hahlbeck et al. 2004). Males were, therefore, much more reliably identified than females with the Griffiths et al. (2000) test in that population. The average reliability of the sex test of Peichel et al. (2004) as assessed with nearly 400 fish from crosses between ecotypes was higher than 99% (error rate in one cross 1.52% and in the other cross 0.61%). In Toli et al. (2016), the error rate for the *Idh* marker varied greatly, that is, between 0% and 51%, depending on the population and scorer. Per population, about 50 fish were sexed and the agarose gels judged by four scorers. The error rate of the other markers was much lower: on average, 0% and

Table 2 Amplification products (number of bands separated by 200 bp or more and allele sizes) made visible on agarose gels of DNA from males (m) and females (f) of various European populations of *Gasterosteus aculeatus*. Primers used were developed for insertion 1 (1), insertion 2 (2) or insertion 1 + 2 (1 + 2) at the 5' end of Gac4202 in *G. aculeatus*

Population	Sex	No. of fish	No. of bands 1	Allele sizes of 1	No. of bands 2	Allele sizes of 2	No. of bands 1 + 2	Allele sizes of 1 + 2
Texel, NL	m	5	2	197, 494	2	95, 335	2	274, 838/840
Texel, NL	f	5	1	197	1	95	1	274
Euskirchen, DE	m	5	2	195/197, 494/496	2	95, 335	2	274, 836/838
Euskirchen, DE	f	5	1	197	1	95	1	274
Tormasad, GB	m	4	2	197, 494	2	95, 335	2	274, 836/838/840
Tormasad, GB	f	5	1	197	1	95	1	274

1.7% for the *Gasm6* and *Sm190* markers, respectively (Toli et al. 2016). In order to minimise errors of sex identification, Toli et al. (2016) strongly advocate a multi-marker approach. The errors with these different markers could be due to several factors, such as the phenotypic sex identification was incorrect, the marker recombined with the sex determination locus, different populations do not share the same X and Y alleles or the genetic marker is unreliable. Our sex identification test has the advantage that bands are far apart (more than 200 bp), thereby minimising inter-scorer variability and user error. The presence of one of the Y-chromosomal insertions in the reference genome suggest that our tests involving insertion 2 may not be applicable to three-spined sticklebacks of all three evolutionary lineages (i.e. Pacific, Atlantic, Japanese Sea; Toli et al. 2016). Future research has to verify this.

Significantly fewer SNPs and indels were assessed within than outside the insertions for unknown reasons. An open question is the source and function of the inserted sequences, but it cannot be excluded that the variation is partly due to errors of the polymerase during PCR amplification. All investigated males had the large insertions on the Y chromosome, while these were lacking on all investigated X chromosomes, so recombination seems to be suppressed.

Sample sizes in the present study were too low to completely comprise allelic variation at the loci used for the sex tests. The results point to the presence of limited intra- and inter-population variation that should be further explored in future studies.

DNA for the sex test was extracted from spines of adult fish. Spine clipping is a common way to mark three-spined sticklebacks both in the laboratory and in the field (e.g. Bakker and Mundwiler 1994). It has been shown not to reduce survival and only temporarily increases immune responses (Wedekind and Little 2004; Henrich et al. 2014). Therefore, the new sex test is not only applicable in dead specimens, but can also be used in live fish.

To sum up, this study provides a cheap, easy and highly reliable way to determine the sex of three-spined sticklebacks of varying age and of different European populations. The sex identification test is an improvement and/or alternative to existing methods (Griffiths et al. 2000; Peichel et al. 2004; Toli et al. 2016). Thus, it gives researchers working on this supermodel a useful tool to include sex as an explaining variable in their studies.

Acknowledgements We are grateful to Gerald Heckel and Marion Mehlis for discussions. We thank Dagmar Wenzel for practical assistance. Dominique Mazzi is acknowledged for breeding sticklebacks. Thomas Schaper and Jürgen Wittler gave permission to catch sticklebacks from the Euskirchen population. Peter Snelderwaard and George Wintermans are gratefully thanked for providing us with Dutch sticklebacks, and Ricarda Modarressie for the Scottish samples. We thank an anonymous reviewer for improving the quality of the manuscript. TCMB and CRL thank the Swiss National Science Foundation for financial support.

Author contributions TCMB and CRL designed the research; TCMB and CRL obtained funding for the study; TG and JGF conducted the experimental work; TCMB, TG and CRL analysed the data; TCMB wrote the manuscript and was supported by CRL and JGF.

Compliance with ethical standards The study conforms to the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour guidelines for the use of animals in research as well as to the legal requirements of Switzerland and Germany.

Funding This study was funded by a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation to TCMB and CRL (SNF grant no. 31-52276.97).

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

References

- Arnold KE, Adam A, Orr KJ, Griffiths R, Barber I (2003) Sex-specific survival and parasitism in three-spined sticklebacks: seasonal patterns revealed by molecular analysis. *J Fish Biol* 63:1046–1050
- Bachtrog D, Mank JE, Peichel CL et al (2014) Sex determination: why so many ways of doing it? *PLoS Biol* 12:e1001899
- Bakker TCM, Mundwiler B (1994) Female mate choice and male red coloration in a natural stickleback population. *Behav Ecol* 5:74–80
- Barber I, Nettleship S (2010) From ‘trash fish’ to supermodel: the rise and rise of the three-spined stickleback in evolution and ecology. *Biologist* 57:15–21
- Bell MA, Foster SA (eds) (1994) The evolutionary biology of the threespine stickleback. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Bell AM, Backström T, Huntingford FA, Pottinger TG, Winberg S (2007) Variable neuroendocrine responses to ecologically-relevant challenges in sticklebacks. *Physiol Behav* 91:15–25
- Bell AM, Dingemans NJ, Hankison SJ, Langenhof MBW, Rollins K (2011) Early exposure to nonlethal predation risk by size-selective predators increases somatic growth and decreases size at adulthood in threespine sticklebacks. *J Evol Biol* 24:943–953
- Bernhardt RR, von Hippel FA, Cresko WA (2006) Perchlorate induces hermaphroditism in threespine sticklebacks. *Environ Toxicol Chem* 25:2087–2096
- Cano JM, Mäkinen HS, Merilä J (2008) Genetic evidence for male-biased dispersal in the three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*). *Mol Ecol* 17:3234–3242
- Estoup A, Solignac M, Harry M, Cornuet JM (1993) Characterization of (GT)_n and (CT)_n microsatellites in two insect species: *Apis mellifera* and *Bombus terrestris*. *Nucleic Acids Res* 21:1427–1431
- Gibson G (2005) The synthesis and evolution of a supermodel. *Science* 307:1890–1891
- Griffiths R, Orr KL, Adam A, Barber I (2000) DNA sex identification in the three-spined stickleback. *J Fish Biol* 57:1331–1334
- Hahlbeck E, Griffiths R, Bengtsson BE (2004) The juvenile three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus* L.) as a model organism for endocrine disruption: I. Sexual differentiation. *Aquat Toxicol* 70:287–310
- Heckel G, Zbinden M, Mazzi D, Kohler A, Reckeweg G, Bakker TCM, Largiadèr CR (2002) Microsatellite markers for the three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus* L.) and their applicability in a freshwater and an anadromous population. *Conserv Genet* 3:79–81
- Henrich T, Hafer N, Mobley KB (2014) Effects of VIE tagging and partial tissue sampling on the immune response of three-spined stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus*. *J Fish Biol* 85:965–971
- Jones FC, Grabherr MG, Chan YF et al (2012) The genomic basis of adaptive evolution in threespine sticklebacks. *Nature* 484:55–61

- King AJ, Fürtbauer I, Mamuneas D, James C, Manica A (2013) Sex-differences and temporal consistency in stickleback fish boldness. *PLoS One* 8:e81116
- Largiadèr CR, Fries V, Kobler B, Bakker TCM (1999) Isolation and characterization of microsatellite loci from the three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus* L.) *Mol Ecol* 8:342–344
- Leinonen T, Cano JM, Merilä J (2011a) Genetic basis of sexual dimorphism in the threespine stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus*. *Heredity* 106:218–227
- Leinonen T, Cano JM, Merilä J (2011b) Genetics of body shape and armour variation in threespine sticklebacks. *J Evol Biol* 24:206–218
- Lenz TL, Eizaguirre C, Scharsack JP, Kalbe M, Milinski M (2009) Disentangling the role of MHC-dependent ‘good genes’ and ‘compatible genes’ in mate-choice decisions of three-spined sticklebacks *Gasterosteus aculeatus* under semi-natural conditions. *J Fish Biol* 75:2122–2142
- Lewis ZR, McClellan MC, Postlethwait JH, Cresko WA, Kaplan RH (2008) Female-specific increase in primordial germ cells marks sex differentiation in threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*). *J Morphol* 269:909–921
- Loehr J, Leinonen T, Herczeg G, O’Hara RB, Merilä J (2012) Heritability of asymmetry and lateral plate number in the threespine stickleback. *PLoS One* 7:e39843
- Mazzi D, Bakker TCM (2003) A predator’s dilemma: prey choice and parasite susceptibility in three-spined sticklebacks. *Parasitology* 126:339–347
- McGee MD, Wainwright PC (2013) Sexual dimorphism in the feeding mechanism of threespine stickleback. *J Exp Biol* 216:835–840
- McPherson FJ, Chenoweth PJ (2012) Mammalian sexual dimorphism. *Anim Reprod Sci* 131:109–122
- Merilä J (2013) Nine-spined stickleback (*Pungitius pungitius*): an emerging model for evolutionary biology research. *Ann NY Acad Sci* 1289:18–35
- Morinha F, Cabral JA, Bastos E (2012) Molecular sexing of birds: a comparative review of polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based methods. *Theriogenology* 78:703–714
- Natri HM, Shikano T, Merilä J (2013) Progressive recombination suppression and differentiation in recently evolved neo-sex chromosomes. *Mol Biol Evol* 30:1131–1144
- Östlund-Nilsson S, Mayer I, Huntingford FA (eds) (2007) *Biology of the three-spined stickleback*. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL
- Peichel CL, Nereng KS, Ohgi KA et al (2001) The genetic architecture of divergence between threespine stickleback species. *Nature* 414:901–905
- Peichel CL, Ross JA, Matson CK et al (2004) The master sex-determination locus in threespine sticklebacks is on a nascent Y chromosome. *Curr Biol* 14:1416–1424
- Ramler D, Mitteroecker P, Shama LN, Wegner KM, Ahnelt H (2014) Nonlinear effects of temperature on body form and developmental canalization in the threespine stickleback. *J Evol Biol* 27:497–507
- Ross JA, Peichel CL (2008) Molecular cytogenetic evidence of rearrangements on the Y chromosome of the threespine stickleback fish. *Genetics* 179:2173–2182
- Sambrook J, Fritsch EF, Maniatis T (1989) *Molecular cloning: a laboratory manual*, 2nd edn. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, New York
- Shikano T, Merilä J (2011) Body size and the number of vertebrae in the nine-spined stickleback (*Pungitius pungitius*). *Biol J Linn Soc* 104:378–385
- Shikano T, Herczeg G, Merilä J (2011a) Molecular sexing and population genetic inference using a sex-linked microsatellite marker in the nine-spined stickleback (*Pungitius pungitius*). *BMC Res Notes* 4:119
- Shikano T, Natri HM, Shimada Y, Merilä J (2011b) High degree of sex chromosome differentiation in stickleback fishes. *BMC Genomics* 12:474
- Shimada Y, Shikano T, Merilä J (2011) A high incidence of selection on physiologically important genes in the three-spined stickleback, *Gasterosteus aculeatus*. *Mol Biol Evol* 28:181–193
- Stärmer H, Pahlsson C, Lindén M (2004) Tandem repeat polymorphism and heteroplasmy in the mitochondrial DNA control region of threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*). *Behaviour* 141:1357–1369
- Toli E-A, Calboli FCF, Shikano T, Merilä J (2016) A universal and reliable assay for molecular sex identification of three-spined sticklebacks (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*). *Mol Ecol Resour* 16:1389–1400
- Urton JR, McCann SR, Peichel CL (2011) Karyotype differentiation between two stickleback species (Gasterosteidae). *Cytogenet Genome Res* 135:150–159
- Wedekind C, Little TJ (2004) The clearance of hidden cestode infection triggered by an independent activation of host defense in a teleost fish. *J Parasitol* 90:1329–1331
- Wootton RJ (1976) *The biology of the sticklebacks*. Academic Press, London
- Wootton RJ (1984) *A functional biology of sticklebacks*. Croom Helm, London
- Zhang Z, Schwartz S, Wagner L, Miller W (2000) A greedy algorithm for aligning DNA sequences. *J Comput Biol* 7:203–214

Online Resource 1

Rapid molecular sexing of three-spined sticklebacks, *Gasterosteus aculeatus* L., based on large Y-chromosomal insertions

Journal of Applied Genetics

Theo C. M. Bakker¹, Thomas Giger, Joachim G. Frommen and Carlo R. Largiadèr

¹Corresponding author: Institute for Evolutionary Biology and Ecology, University of Bonn, An der Immenburg 1, D-53121 Bonn, Germany
e-mail: tbakker@evolution.uni-bonn.de

Fig. S1 Sequence alignment of the cloned Y- and X- chromosomal PCR-fragments with the *Gasterosteus aculeatus* (accession number: AANH01001637.1) whole genome shotgun sequence contig no. 1.001636 and the microsatellite clone GAC4202 sequence. Cloned fragments are aligned without primer sequences. Of the ca. 10,000 assessed nucleotides 1.5% could not be unambiguously determined (indicated by N). Labels for cloned fragments are given as:

“Population“_“Individual“/“Number of clone“/“Y or X chromosomal fragment“

-: indicates deletion (or insertion at this position in other fish)

	500	520	540	560					
gb IAANH01001637.1					465				
Clone GAC4202					465				
Roche M33/3 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Roche M33/4 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Roche M39/3 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Roche M39/4 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Roche M39/5 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Roche M39/6 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Texel 035/1 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Texel 099/1 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Texel 099/6 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
W.see MN1/1 Y	ACTCATAGAT	GGACATGTTT	GCTGCAATAG	GGAGTGGAA	TGCGTGGAAA	TACTGTGAGT	CAAGAAAGTT	GGATGTGCTC	206
Roche F32/3 X					112				
Roche F32/5 X					112				
Roche F32/8 X					112				
Roche F32/9 X					113				
Roche F32/10 X					112				
Roche M33/10 X					112				
Roche M33/15 X					112				
Roche M39/11 X					112				
Roche M39/20 X					112				
Texel 099/2 X					112				
Texel 099/5 X					112				
W.see W12/5 X					112				
	580	600	620	640					
gb IAANH01001637.1					465				
Clone GAC4202					465				
Roche M33/3 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
Roche M33/4 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	285
Roche M39/3 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
Roche M39/4 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
Roche M39/5 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
Roche M39/6 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
Texel 035/1 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
Texel 099/1 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
Texel 099/6 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
W.see MN1/1 Y	AGACAAACAGT	GTTGARGAGA	GGTGTGACTA	CACAGAGCTG	CAAGAAACAG	CAC - TCCTCT	TGATGATCTG	ATCTGATGAA	286
Roche F32/3 X					112				
Roche F32/5 X					112				
Roche F32/8 X					112				
Roche F32/9 X					113				
Roche F32/10 X					112				
Roche M33/10 X					112				
Roche M33/15 X					112				
Roche M39/11 X					112				
Roche M39/20 X					112				
Texel 099/2 X					112				
Texel 099/5 X					112				
W.see W12/5 X					112				
	660	680	700	720					
gb IAANH01001637.1					465				
Clone GAC4202					465				
Roche M33/3 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	365
Roche M33/4 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	364
Roche M39/3 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	365
Roche M39/4 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	365
Roche M39/5 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	365
Roche M39/6 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	365
Texel 035/1 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	364
Texel 099/1 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	365
Texel 099/6 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	365
W.see MN1/1 Y	TGGTGAOTGA	ATAATTTCTTN	TGAGATATGT	GAAAGGTTTG	ATGAAATATTT	CTTTTGGGAT	ATTTTCTAG	CGTTAAGTGT	365
Roche F32/3 X					112				
Roche F32/5 X					112				
Roche F32/8 X					112				
Roche F32/9 X					113				
Roche F32/10 X					112				
Roche M33/10 X					112				
Roche M33/15 X					112				
Roche M39/11 X					112				
Roche M39/20 X					112				
Texel 099/2 X					112				
Texel 099/5 X					112				
W.see W12/5 X					112				

```

gb|IAANH01001637.1|
Clone GAC4202
Roche M33/3 Y
Roche M33/4 Y
Roche M39/3 Y
Roche M39/4 Y
Roche M39/5 Y
Roche M39/6 Y
Texel 035/1 Y
Texel 099/1 Y
Texel 099/6 Y
W.see MN1/1 Y
Roche F32/3 X
Roche F32/5 X
Roche F32/8 X
Roche F32/9 X
Roche F32/10 X
Roche M33/10 X
Roche M33/15 X
Roche M39/11 X
Roche M39/20 X
Texel 099/2 X
Texel 099/5 X
W.see W12/5 X

740 760 780 800
| | | |
...
820 840 860 880
| | | |
...
900 920 940 960
| | | |
...

```