A-175

PCR PRIMERS COMPLEMENTARY TO THE PECTATE LYASE GENE FAMILY DISTINGUISH *COLLETOTRICHUM GLOEOSPORIOIDES* FROM *COLLETOTRICHUM ACUTATUM*

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The pectate lyase gene family of the fungus *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides*, which can cause fruit rots of avocados, is involved in pathogenicity. A closely related fungus, *C. acutatum*, is also isolated from fruit rots of avocado in New Zealand. In order to distinguish these two pathogens, degenerate PCR primers were designed to regions of homology between the published sequences of the pectate and pectin lyase genes of *C. gloeosporioides*. A similarly sized product of 550 bp resulted from using primers complementary to the pectate lyase gene for both *C. acutatum* and *C. gloeosporioides*. The product from *C. acutatum* showed closest homology (64%) to the published sequence of pectate lyase gene pelA from a *C. gloeosporioides* isolate from apple in New Zealand. Primers complementary to the pectin lyase gene distinguished between the two fungal species, a c. 550 bp band was produced for *C. acutatum* and a c. 1400 bp band for *C. gloeosporioides*.