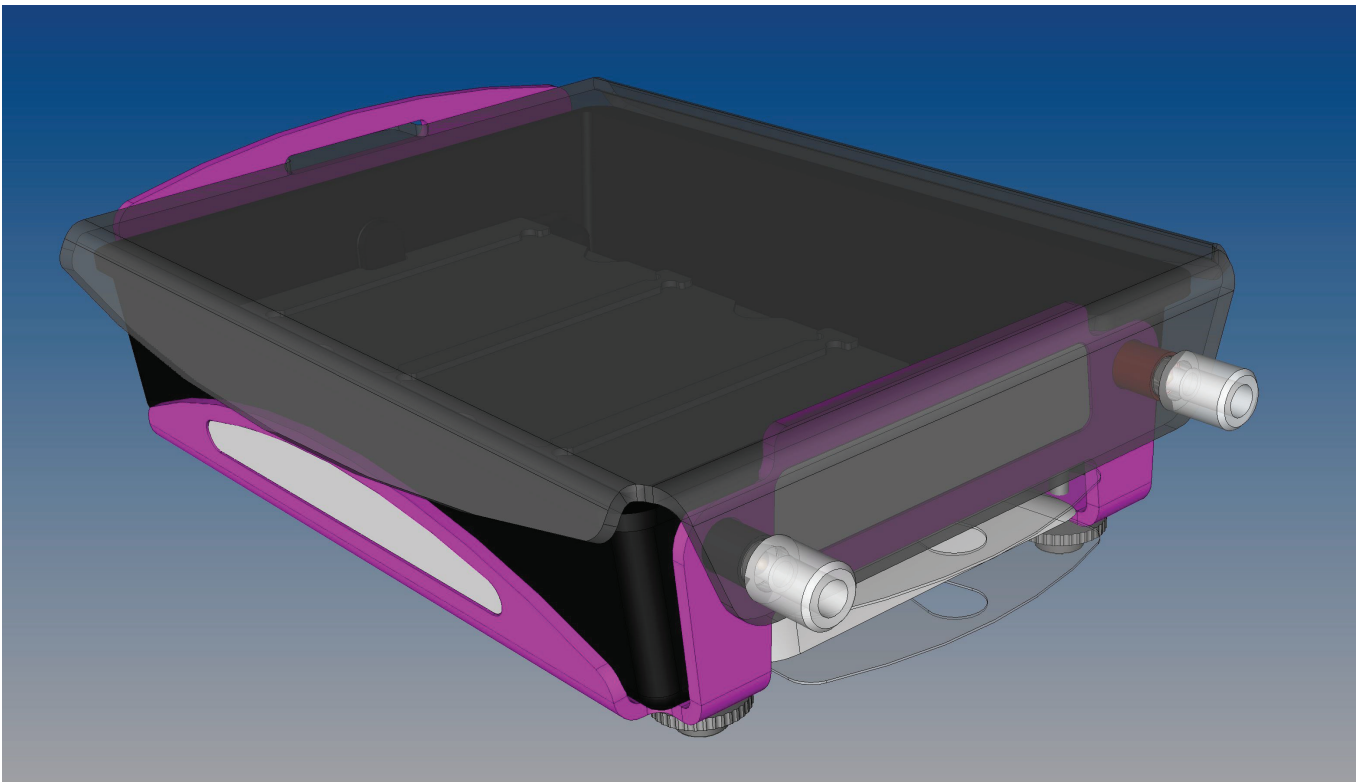


# CometAssay<sup>®</sup> Electrophoresis System II

## Electrophoresis System for the CometAssay

Catalog Number 4250-050-ES



This package insert must be read in its entirety before using this product.  
For research use only. Not for use in diagnostic procedures.

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## INTRODUCTION

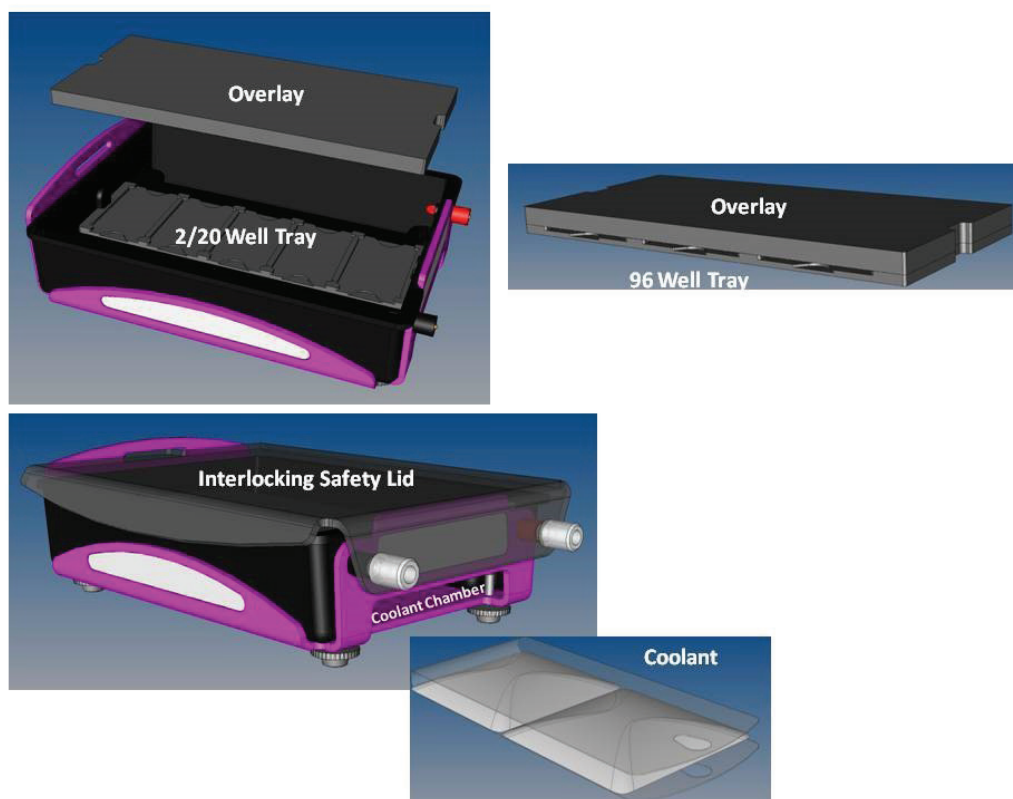
The CometAssay® provides a simple and effective method for evaluating DNA damage in cells. The principle of the assay is based upon the ability of denatured, cleaved DNA fragments to migrate out of nucleoids under the influence of an electric field, whereas undamaged DNA migrates slower and remains within the confines of the nucleoid when a current is applied. The sample is then visualized by epifluorescence microscopy. Evaluation of the DNA “comet” tail shape and migration pattern allows for assessment of DNA damage.

The Neutral CometAssay is typically used to detect double-stranded breaks, whereas the Alkaline CometAssay is more sensitive, and is used to detect smaller amounts of damage including single and double-stranded breaks. In comet assays, cells are immobilized in a bed of low melting point agarose, on a CometSlide™. For both assay types, cells are lysed and the nucleoids subjected to electrophoresis. In the Alkaline CometAssay, samples are treated with alkali to unwind and denature the DNA and hydrolyze sites of damage prior to electrophoresis. Subsequent staining with a fluorescent DNA intercalating dye is performed for visualization. Quantitative and statistical data can readily be generated by analysis of the results using one of several commercially available image analysis software packages which calculate tail length, percent DNA in the tail, and tail moment.

Since variability has been observed when performing the comet assay, the CometAssay Electrophoresis System II (Figure 1) was developed and optimized for use with CometAssay Kits (e.g. R&D Systems®, Catalog # 4250-050-K), CometAssay Alkaline Control Cells and CometAssay Neutral Control Cells (R&D Systems, Catalog # 4256-010-CC and Catalog # 4257-010-NC, respectively). Electrophoresis may be performed using either Neutral Electrophoresis Buffer or Alkaline Electrophoresis Solution. Alkaline electrophoresis is more sensitive to variations in buffer height, temperature, and ion concentration, which affect DNA migration and can adversely impact results.

CometAssay Electrophoresis System II overcomes assay variability first by placing an acrylic overlay on top of an elevated slide tray to maintain optimal buffer height for DNA migration. Secondly, a constant buffer temperature is maintained using an external chamber under the tank to cool the glass slide platform and buffer chamber. Electrophoresis time for optimal DNA migration is achieved in 30 minutes with Alkaline (pH>13) Electrophoresis Solution, or 45 minutes with Neutral Electrophoresis Buffer at 1V/cm. The smoke grey colored unit is designed to minimize exposure to UV light but still allow visual inspection. Third, specially designed slide trays are also provided to accommodate 2, 20 and 96 well slides and maintain proper slide orientation during electrophoresis. CometAssay Electrophoresis System II, CometAssay Alkaline Control Cells, and CometAssay Neutral Control Cells enable investigators to consistently optimize their comet assays for highly reproducible results, and to standardize electrophoresis methods between individual users and laboratories.

**Figure 1:** CometAssay ES II



## PRECAUTIONS

- Caution! Electrical Hazard! This equipment is designed for use with a DC power supply providing up to 250 VDC. Careless handling can result in electrical shock. To avoid any risk of injury, the instrument should be operated in accordance with the instruction provided.
- The original purchaser has a year (1) warranty for any defects in materials or workmanship under normal use.
- Do not freeze unit. Never operate damaged equipment.
- Do not cut cables. The CometAssay® Electrophoresis System II is designed with an interlocking safety lid so no part of the active electrophoresis chamber is exposed during operation. Do not attempt to modify this safety design.
- Always connect the cables to the power supply before turning the power supply on.
- Never exceed maximum allowed voltage (250V) or current (450 mA).
- Power to unit is to be supplied by an external DC-voltage power supply.
- This instrument is designed and certified to meet IEC 1010-1 safety standards.
- We recommend cleaning the unit with water and nonabrasive soap or detergent, followed by a rinse with deionized water. Avoid abrasive cleaners and rough cloths or brushes. Do not expose the apparatus to window sprays, phenol, acetone, benzene, halogenated hydrocarbon solvents, or undiluted laboratory alcohols.
- Store at 2-8 °C or room temperature. Do not expose the unit to prolonged exposure to UV light, or excessive heat such as dry heat sterilization or autoclaving.

## DESCRIPTION OF EQUIPMENT

**Electrophoresis Tank with Leveling Bubble** - The electrophoresis tank is one continuous chemically resistant piece. Underneath the deck plate is an external chamber where the coolant is placed to absorb heat from the slide plate to help maintain a cool and even slide temperature during alkaline electrophoresis. The level of the electrophoresis system is adjusted using the four leveling feet with the leveling bubble resting on top of the deck plate. The recommended volume of electrophoresis buffer is 850 mL. Base dimensions are 21 x 29 cm.

**Safety Lid and Cables** - The interlocking safety lid is made of black translucent smoke grey acrylic plastic with attached cables. The lid is designed to slide into a rectangular latch. The cables and latch are at opposite ends of the safety lid. Always check that the cables are properly connected to the electrodes. Contact manufacturer if 4 mm cable adaptors are needed for BioRad power supply.

**2/20 Well Slide Trays** - The slide trays, machined from acrylic material, are designed to locate the slides in their running position and for easy slide removal at the completion of electrophoresis. The 2/20 Well Slide Tray holds ten 2-well or five 20-well slides. The 96 Well Slide Tray holds three 96-well slides.

**Slide Tray Overlay** - The 1.3 cm acrylic overlay is designed to sit on top of the Slide Tray and maintain a constant buffer height (current path) of 0.4 cm above the tray. The volume of electrophoresis buffer in the tank must be filled below the top of the overlay but above its base line for proper operation.

## MATERIALS REQUIRED BUT NOT SUPPLIED

### Equipment:

- 1-200  $\mu$ L and 200-1000  $\mu$ L pipette tips
- Serological pipettor and pipettes
- Boiling water bath and 37 °C water bath
- Epifluorescence microscope equipped with Fluorescein filter or light transmission microscope when using silver staining kit
- 1 L graduated cylinder
- 2-8 °C refrigerator/cold room
- PowerPac™ HC Power Supply (Bio-Rad®, Catalog # 1645052) *recommended*

### Reagents:

- Deionized water
- 10X PBS,  $\text{Ca}^{++}$  and  $\text{Mg}^{++}$  free (R&D Systems, Catalog # 4870-500)
- 95% Ethanol (reagent grade)
- TE Buffer (10 mM Tris (pH 7.5), 1 mM EDTA)
- CometAssay® Kit (required: e.g. R&D Systems®, Catalog # 4250-050-K)
- 10,000X SYBR® Gold in DMSO

### For Alkaline assays:

- NaOH Pellets
- 0.5 M EDTA (pH 8.0)
- CometAssay Alkaline Control Cells (R&D Systems, Catalog # 4256-010-CC)

### For Neutral assays:

- Tris Base
- Ammonium Acetate
- Sodium Acetate
- Glacial Acetic Acid
- CometAssay Neutral Control Cells (R&D Systems, Catalog # 4257-010-NC)

### Optional reagents:

- CometAssay Silver Staining Components Kit (R&D Systems, Catalog # 4254-200-K)
- Dimethylsulfoxide
- Tris Borate EDTA Buffer

## REAGENT PREPARATION

Prepare one of the following electrophoresis solutions based on the sensitivity of assay desired. Additional reagents are required. For information regarding preparation of all needed reagents, see the instructions for use for CometAssay Kit (R&D Systems®, Catalog # 4250-050-K).

### FOR ALKALINE COMETASSAY

**Alkaline Unwinding Solution, pH > 13 (200 mM NaOH, 1 mM EDTA)** - Prepare a stock solution of 500 mM EDTA, pH 8.0 (disodium salt). Use of freshly made solution is recommended. Cool to 2-8 °C. For 1 liter of electrophoresis solution:

| Reaction Component | Volume                        |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| NaOH Pellets       | 8.0 g                         |
| 500 mM EDTA , pH 8 | 2.0 mL                        |
| Distilled water    | 1 L (after NaOH is dissolved) |

### FOR NEUTRAL COMETASSAY

**1X Neutral Electrophoresis Buffer** - Dissolve in 450 mL of distilled water. Adjust to pH = 9.0 with Glacial Acetic Acid. Adjust volume to 500 mL and filter sterilize and store at room temperature. Dilute the 10X stock to 1X in distilled water to prepare 1 liter working strength buffer and cool to 2-8 °C. To prepare 10X Neutral Electrophoresis Buffer:

| Reaction Component                 | Volume   |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Tris Base (mol. wt. = 121.14)      | 60.57 g  |
| Sodium Acetate (mol. wt. = 136.08) | 204.12 g |

## OPERATION OF EQUIPMENT

### Initial Setup

1. Slide coolant into the Coolant Chamber (Figure 1). Cool and store the unit in 2-8 °C cold room or refrigerator.
2. Level the electrophoresis tank using the leveling bubble provided by adjusting the four thumbscrew feet.

### Electrophoresis

1. Cool electrophoresis tank, tray, overlay and lid to 2-8 °C by placing in cold room or refrigerator. Do not freeze the unit. Align the slots of the appropriate slide tray and place on glass slide platform. Inserting finger slots of slide tray adjacent to cathode (black) electrode is recommended.
2. Prepare Electrophoresis Solution (Buffer). Prepare 1L fresh as described in Reagent Preparation and cool to 2-8 °C. Pour ~850 mL into cooled electrophoresis tank.



## OPERATION OF EQUIPMENT *CONTINUED*

3. Perform CometAssay® Protocol.
4. Perform Electrophoresis.
  - i. Immediately prior to electrophoresis, place electrophoresis unit at room temperature.
  - ii. Insert slides into tray. Two well slides are locked into position by placing two slides into each position. Recommend always placing slide with logo adjacent to cathode (black) electrode. DNA migrates towards the anode (red) during electrophoresis (Figure 1).
  - iii. The 850 mL of Electrophoresis Solution (Buffer) should completely cover the slides. Carefully insert Slide Tray Overlay over slide tray by aligning slots. To ensure complete buffer coverage of slides, gradually lower Slide Tray Overlay in a manner similar to lowering a slide coverslip.
  - iv. Verify that the Electrophoresis Solution (Buffer) is not above the Slide Tray Overlay.
  - v. Set the power supply to 21 V (1 volt per cm). For Alkaline CometAssay apply voltage for 30 minutes for 2/20 well slides and 40 minutes for 96 well slides. For Neutral CometAssay apply voltage for 45 minutes for 2/20 well slides.

### ALKALINE TIPS

The Alkaline Electrophoresis Solution is a non-buffered system and **temperature control is highly recommended**. If the electrophoresis unit and buffer are cooled to 2-8 °C, performance of electrophoresis at room temperature for 30-40 minutes is acceptable. The cooled glass slide platform maintains the slide temperature.

In-house electrophoresis parameters with 200 mM NaOH/1 mM EDTA Alkaline Solution, pH>13.0 at 2-8 °C, has an amperage of ~220 mA. With increases in buffer temperature, the amperage increase is problematic for some power supplies with higher alkali concentrations. If the user prefers a higher alkali concentration, it is recommended to run at 0.7 volts per cm with a proportional increase in electrophoresis time.

**The Slide Tray Overlay is recommended for all Alkaline Electrophoresis.** Any variation in buffer height directly affects DNA migration. Increase in buffer height results in slower DNA migration. The Slide Tray Overlay maintains a buffer height of 0.4 cm.

### NEUTRAL TIPS

Use of 1X Neutral Electrophoresis Buffer, based on in house experience, has amperage of ~110 mA when performed at 21V.

The Neutral CometAssay will detect mainly double-stranded breaks. Neutral CometAssay images are different from Alkaline CometAssay images (Data Analysis, Figures 2 and 3). A high level of damage observed in Alkaline Comet does not necessarily mean damage will be observable using Neutral CometAssay and longer electrophoresis times (beyond 1 hour) may not necessarily improve results.



## COMET ASSAY PROTOCOLS

### ALKALINE COMET QUICK REFERENCE

The Assay Protocol described below is written as a Quick Reference using CometAssay Alkaline Control Cells (Catalog# 4256-010-CC) for two well slides. Reagents and detailed instructions including reagent preparation are provided with R&D System's CometAssay® Kits.

1. Cool Lysis Solution at 2-8 °C for at least 20 minutes before use.
2. Melt CometAssay LMAgarose and cool in a 37 °C water bath for at least 20 minutes.
3. Combine 50 µL of CC0 (control cells) with 500 µL molten CometAssay LMAgarose (at 37 °C) and immediately pipette 50 µL onto two well CometSlide. Use side of pipette tip to spread agarose/cells over sample area.
4. Repeat step 3 for samples CC1, CC2, and CC3.
5. Place slides at 2-8 °C **in the dark** for 10 minutes.
6. Immerse slides in 2-8 °C Lysis Solution for 30-60 minutes.
7. Immerse slides in 50 mL freshly prepared Alkaline Unwinding Solution, pH>13 for 20 minutes at room temperature, **in the dark**.
8. Perform Alkaline Electrophoresis.
9. Immerse slides twice in distilled water for 5 minutes each, then in 70% ethanol for 5 minutes.
10. Dry samples at 37 °C for 10-15 minutes.
11. Place 100 µL of diluted SYBR Gold onto each sample for 30 minutes. Remove excess SYBR solution and briefly rinse in water. Allow slide to dry completely at 37 °C
12. View slides by epifluorescence microscopy.

### NEUTRAL COMET QUICK REFERENCE

The Assay Protocol described below is written as a Quick Reference using CometAssay Neutral Cells (Catalog# 4257-010-NC) for two well slides. Reagents and detailed instructions including reagent preparation are provided with R&D System's CometAssay® Kits.

For optimal results, the Neutral CometAssay should always be performed using Neutral CometAssay Neutral Control Cells (R&D Systems®, Catalog # 4257-010-NC).

**Note:** CometAssay Alkaline Control Cells (R&D System, Catalog # 4256-010-CC) are designed for Alkaline CometAssay only.

1. Cool Lysis Solution at 2-8 °C for at least 20 minutes before use.
2. Melt CometAssay LMAgarose and cool in a 37 °C water bath for at least 20 minutes.

## COMET ASSAY PROTOCOLS *CONTINUED*

3. Combine 50  $\mu\text{L}$  of NC0 (control cells) with 500  $\mu\text{L}$  molten CometAssay LMAgarose (at 37 °C) and immediately pipette 50  $\mu\text{L}$  onto two well CometSlides. Use side of pipette tip to spread agarose/cells over sample area.
4. Repeat step 3 for samples NC1, NC2, and NC3, respectively.
5. Place slides at 2-8 °C **in the dark** for 10 minutes.
6. Immerse slides in 2-8 °C Lysis Solution for 1 hour.
7. Immerse slides in 50 mL of 2-8 °C 1X Neutral Electrophoresis Buffer for 30 minutes.
8. Perform Neutral Electrophoresis.
9. Immerse slides in DNA Precipitation Solution for 30 minutes at room temperature.
10. Immerse slides in 70% ethanol for 30 minutes at room temperature.
11. Dry samples at 37 °C for 10-15 minutes.
12. Place 100  $\mu\text{L}$  of diluted SYBR Gold onto each sample for 30 minutes. Remove excess SYBR solution and briefly rinse in distilled water. Allow slide to dry completely at 37 °C.
13. View slides by epifluorescence microscopy.

## DATA ANALYSIS

When excited (425-500 nm) the DNA-bound SYBR® Gold emits green light. In healthy cells the fluorescence is confined to the nucleoid (comprised of high molecular weight DNA): undamaged DNA is supercoiled and thus, does not migrate very far out of the nucleoid under the influence of an electric current. Whereas in cells that have accrued DNA damage, migrating fragments (comet tail) from the nucleoid (comet head) are observed. The negatively charged DNA migrates toward the anode and the extrusion length reflects increasing relaxation of supercoiling, which is indicative of damage. Common descriptors of DNA damage for alkaline comet assays are Percent DNA in the Tail, and Tail Moment. Percent DNA in the Tail is a normalized measure of the percent of total cell DNA found in the tail. Tail moment is a damage measure combining the amount of DNA in the tail with distance of migration. In neutral comet assays, Tail Moment is primarily used, since tail length continues to increase in contrast to alkaline comet tails which have finite lengths.

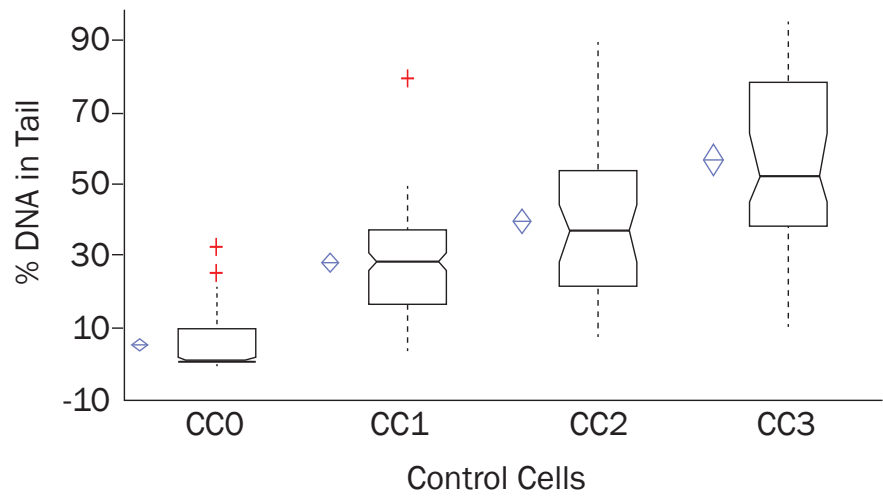
**Qualitative Analysis (Alkaline CometAssay)** - The comet tail can be scored according to DNA content (intensity). The control (untreated cells) should be used to determine the characteristics of data for a healthy cell. Scoring can then be made according to nominal, medium or high intensity tail DNA content. At least 50 cells should be scored per sample.

**Quantitative Analysis (Alkaline and Neutral CometAssay)** - There are several image analysis systems that are suitable for quantitation of CometAssay data. The more sophisticated systems include the microscope, camera and computer analysis package. These systems can be set up to measure the length of DNA migration, image length, nuclear size, and calculate DNA damage parameters. At least 50 randomly selected cells should be analyzed per sample.

FEATURED DATA

Alkaline CometAssay

In Figure 2a, data collected for each CometAssay Alkaline Control Cell population (R&D Systems®, Catalog # 4256-010-CC) is shown as side-by-side vertical box plots for comparison. The diamond shows the mean and confidence interval around the mean. The notched box shows the median, lower and upper quartiles, and the 75% confidence interval around the median. An example is provided below.



| % DNA BY<br>ETOPOSIDE | N  | MEAN   | SD      | SE     | 75% CI OF MEAN | MEDIAN | IQR    | 75% CI OF MEDIAN |
|-----------------------|----|--------|---------|--------|----------------|--------|--------|------------------|
| CC0                   | 50 | 5.757  | 7.2720  | 1.0928 | 4.485-7.029    | 1.640  | 8.925  | 1.290-2.230      |
| CC1                   | 50 | 28.374 | 14.0080 | 1.9810 | 26.068-30.680  | 28.990 | 20.313 | 25.180-31.840    |
| CC2                   | 50 | 39.736 | 21.8164 | 3.0853 | 36.144-43.328  | 37.050 | 32.183 | 27.790-44.630    |
| CC3                   | 50 | 56.800 | 23.5896 | 3.3360 | 52.916-60.683  | 51.905 | 40.240 | 45.460-64.390    |

Figure 2a: Box-Whisker plot of Control Cells: Percent DNA in Comet Tail

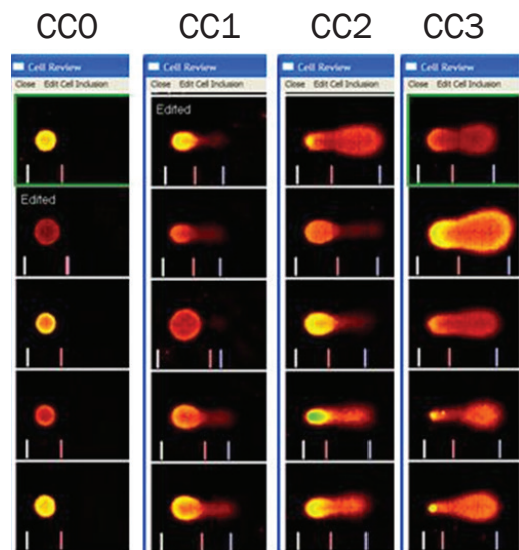
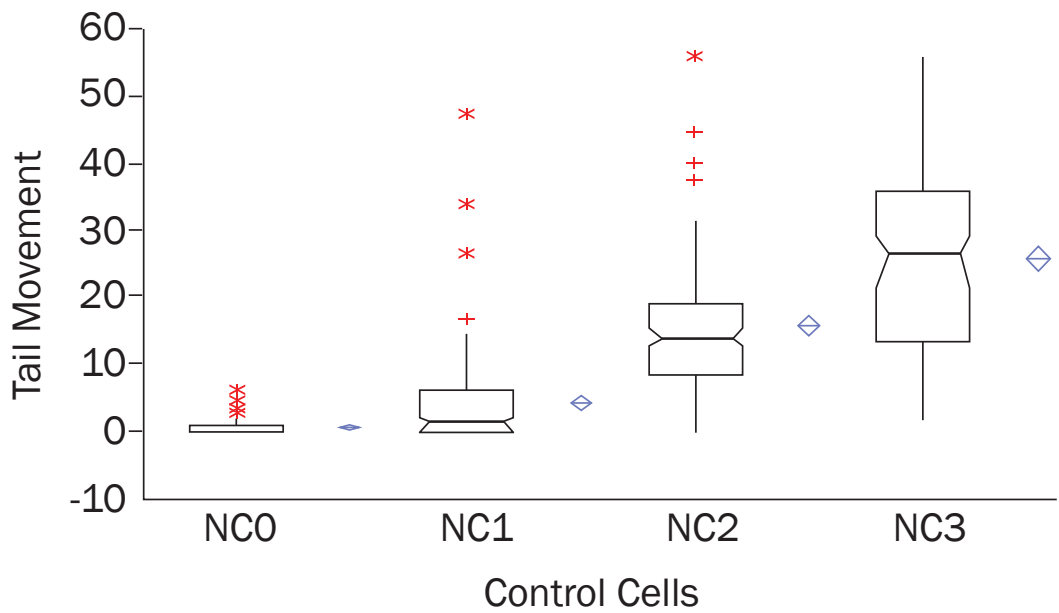


Figure 2b: Example comet tail shapes for each population.

Neutral CometAssay

Data collected for each CometAssay Neutral Control Cell population (R&D Systems®, Catalog # 4257-010-NC) is provided below.



| TM By Bleomycin | N  | MEAN   | SD      | SE     | 75% CI OF MEAN | MEDIAN | IQR    | 75% CI OF MEDIAN |
|-----------------|----|--------|---------|--------|----------------|--------|--------|------------------|
| CC0             | 75 | 0.677  | 1.2410  | 0.1433 | 0.511-0.843    | 0.000  | 0.637  | 0.000-0.140      |
| CC1             | 75 | 4.316  | 7.7817  | 0.8986 | 3.274-5.358    | 1.360  | 5.748  | 0.240-2.510      |
| CC2             | 75 | 15.711 | 10.7829 | 1.2451 | 14.268-17.155  | 13.600 | 10.117 | 12.830-14.950    |
| CC3             | 75 | 25.730 | 13.7918 | 1.5925 | 23.884-27.577  | 26.780 | 22.750 | 20.810-28.930    |

Figure 3a: Box-Whisker plot of Neutral Control Cells: Tail Moment

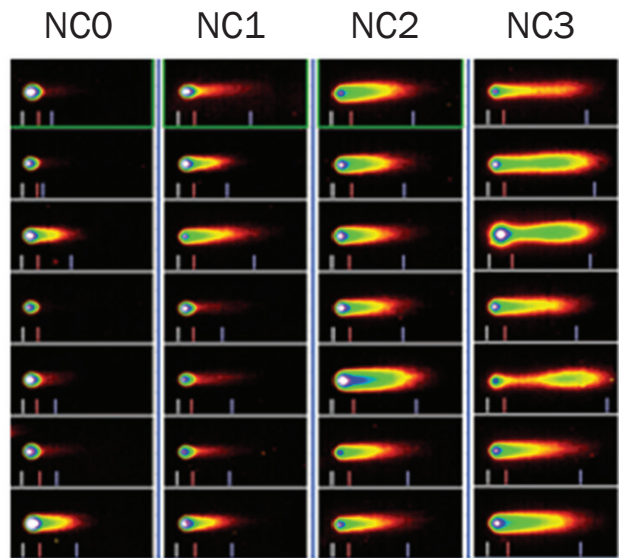


Figure 3b: Example comet tail shapes for each population.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### Neutral CometAssay

The CometAssay may be performed using neutral conditions that employ 1X TBE. Without treatment with Alkaline Buffer, this Neutral CometAssay will also detect mainly double-stranded breaks.

1. Cool Lysis Solution at 2-8 °C for at least 20 minutes before use.
2. Melt CometAssay LMAgarose and cool in a 37 °C water bath for at least 20 minutes.
3. Combine 50 µl of cells at  $1 \times 10^5$ /mL with 500 µl molten CometAssay LMAgarose (at 37 °C) and immediately pipette 50 µL onto two well CometSlides. Use side of pipette tip to spread agarose/cells over sample area.
4. Repeat step 3 for remaining samples.
5. Place slides at 2-8 °C **in the dark** for 10 minutes.
5. Immerse slides in 2-8 °C Lysis Solution for 30 minutes.
6. Immerse slides in 50 mL of 2-8 °C 1X TBE buffer for 15 minutes.

| Reaction Component | Volume |
|--------------------|--------|
| Tris Base          | 108 g  |
| Boric Acid         | 55 g   |
| EDTA               | 9.3 g  |

- a. Dissolve in 900 mL distilled water. Adjust volume to 1 liter, filter sterilize, and store at room temperature. Dilute the 10X TBE to 1X in distilled water to prepare 1 liter working strength buffer and cool to 2-8 °C.
7. For the CometAssay Electrophoresis II, add ~850 mL 2-8 °C 1X TBE Buffer, place slides in electrophoresis slide tray and cover with Slide Tray Overlay. Set power supply to 21 volts and apply voltage for 40 minutes.
  8. Immerse slides in distilled water for 5 minutes.
  9. Immerse slides in 70% ethanol for 5 minutes.
  10. Dry samples at 37 °C for 10-15 minutes.
  11. Place 100 µL of diluted SYBR Gold onto each sample and stain 30 minutes at room temperature **in the dark**. Remove excess SYBR solution. Allow slide to dry completely at 37 °C.
  12. View slides by epifluorescence microscopy.

## APPENDIX B

### Alternative Alkaline Electrophoresis Solution 300 mM NaOH, 1 mM EDTA pH>13.0:

For 1 liter of electrophoresis solution:

| Reaction Component                        | Volume |
|---|--------|
| NaOH Pellets                              | 12 g   |
| 500 mM EDTA                               | 2.0 mL |
| Distilled water (after NaOH is dissolved) | 1.0 L  |

Use of freshly made solution is recommended. Cool to 2-8 °C.

This amperage increases with 300 mM NaOH/1mM EDTA at 2-8 °C and electrophoresis increased to 35-40 minutes for 2 and 20 well slides.

### DNA Stains

Important parameters to consider in choosing a DNA stain for the alkaline comet assay are similar fluorescence and decay rates for single- and double-strand DNA.

| DYE              | ABS/EM (NM) | SS:DSDNA FLUORESCENCE | SS:DSDNA DECAY | SIGNAL:BKGRD |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|
| EtBr             | 520/608     | 1.0                   | 0.89           | ~10          |
| DAPI             | 356/455     | 0.55                  | 0.85           | ~20          |
| Propidium Iodide | 536/624     | 0.93                  | 0.93           | ~20          |
| SYBR Gold        | 496/540     | 0.84                  | 0.74           | >1000        |
| SYBR Green       | 496/522     | 0.57                  | 0.47           | >1000        |
| YoYo-1           | 490/507     | 0.66                  | 0.73           | ~400         |

To use SYBR Green instead of SYBR Gold, simply prepare 1:10,000X SYBR Green I Staining Solution. The diluted stock is stable for several weeks when stored at 2-8 °C **in the dark**.

| Reaction Component                         | Volume |
|--|--------|
| SYBR Green I (10,000X concentrate in DMSO) | 1 µL   |
| TE Buffer, pH 7.5                          | 10 mL  |

## TROUBLESHOOTING

### General problems

| PROBLEM  | CAUSE  | SOLUTION  |
|--|--|---|
| Cables do not fit power supply.  | BioRad power supply.   | Contact manufacturer if 4 mm cable adaptors are needed for BioRad power supply.   |
| Unexpected and/or variety of tail shapes.                                | CometAssay LMAgarose too hot.  | Cool CometAssay LMAgarose to 37 °C before adding cells.   |
| Cells in CometAssay LMAgarose did not remain attached to the CometSlide. | Electrophoresis solution too hot.  | Control temperature performing electrophoresis at 2-8 °C.   |
|  | Cells were not washed to remove medium before combining with CometAssay LMAgarose. | The pH of medium and carry over serum proteins, etc., can reduce the adherence of the agarose. Suspend cells in 1X PBS. |
|  | Agarose percentage was too low.  | Do not increase ratio of cells to molten agarose by more than 1-10.   |
|  | CometAssay LMAgarose was not fully set before samples were processed.              | Ensure 0.5 mm dried ring due to agarose disc retraction is seen at the edge of the CometSlide area.                     |
|  | CometAssay LMAgarose unevenly set on the slide.                                    | Spread the agarose with the side of a pipette tip to ensure uniformity of agarose disc and better adherence.            |
|  | Rinsing steps too harsh.   | Gently place slides into solutions. Do not pour solutions over slides.  |

### Specific to Alkaline CometAssay

| PROBLEM  | CAUSE  | SOLUTION  |
|--|--|---|
| Most cells in untreated control sample have large comet tails.                                       | Unwanted damage to cells occurred in culture or in sample preparations.                        | Check morphology of cells to ensure healthy appearance.<br>Handle cells or tissues gently to avoid physical damage.                                       |
|  | Electrophoresis solution too hot.  | Control temperature by performing electrophoresis at 2-8 °C.  |
|  | Intracellular activity.  | Keep cells on ice and prepare cell samples immediately before combining with molten CometAssay.   |
| Most cells in untreated control sample have small to medium comet tails.                             | Endogenous oxidative damage or endonuclease activity after sample preparation is damaging DNA. | Ensure Lysis Solution was chilled before use.   |
|  |  | Add DMSO to any cell sample that may contain heme groups.   |
|  |  | Ensure PBS used is calcium and magnesium free.  |
|  |  | Work under dimmed light conditions or under yellow light.   |
| In positive control (e.g. 100 µM hydrogen peroxide for 30 minutes on ice) no evidence of comet tail. | No damage to DNA.  | Use fresh hydrogen peroxide to induce damage.   |
|  | Sample was not processed correctly   | Ensure each protocol step was performed correctly. Failure to lyse, denature in alkali, or to properly perform electrophoresis may generate poor results. |
| Comet tails present but not significant in positive control.   | Insufficient denaturation in Alkaline Solution.  | Increase time in Alkaline Solution up to 1 hour.  |
|  | Insufficient electrophoresis time.   | Increase time of electrophoresis up to up to 1 hour for alkaline electrophoresis. Increase time of electrophoresis when running at cold temperatures.     |



## Specific to Neutral CometAssay

| PROBLEM   | CAUSE  | SOLUTION   |
|---|--|--|
| In positive control, no evidence of comet tail.                                     | Damaging agent doesn't cause double-strand breaks.   | Confirm damage by Alkaline Comet.                                |
|   |  | Run Neutral Control Cells to confirm electrophoresis conditions. |
|   |  | Increase treatment with damaging agent.                          |
| In positive control, comet tails are too long and do not fit analysis window.       | Cells are necrotic or apoptotic.                     | Verify 90% viability.  |
|   |  | Decrease treatment with damaging agent.                          |
|   | Electrophoresis time too long.                       | Decrease electrophoresis time to 15-30 minutes.                  |
| Diffusion Artifacts are present;<br>Difficulty distinguishing between head and tail | Electrophoresis buffer conditions may not be optimal | Use 1X Neutral Electrophoresis Buffer and follow protocol.       |

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