Alfalfa vein mottling virus, a novel potyvirid infecting *Medicago sativa* L.

[1] Lev G. Nemchinov*, [2] Olga A. Postnikova, [3] William M. Wintermantel, [4] John C. Palumbo and [1] Sam

Grinstead

[1]USDA-ARS, Molecular Plant Pathology Laboratory, Beltsville, MD, USA; [2]USDA-ARS, Animal Biosciences

and Biotechnology Laboratory, Beltsville MD; [3]USDA-ARS Crop Improvement and Protection Research,

Salinas, CA; [4]University of Arizona Yuma Agricultural Center Yuma, AZ.

*Corresponding author: lev.nemchinov@usda.gov

Abstract

We have recently identified a novel virus detected in alfalfa seed material. The virus was tentatively

named alfalfa-associated potyvirus 1, as its genomic fragments bore similarities with potyvirids. In this

study, we obtained a complete genome sequence of the virus and classified it as a tentative species in

the new genus, most closely related to the members of the genus *Ipomovirus* in the family *Potyviridae*.

This assumption is based on the genome structure, phylogenetic relationships, transmission electron

microscopy investigations and, in part, on serological cross-reactivity of the virus. We also demonstrated

its mechanical transmission to the indicator plant *Nicotiana benthamiana* and to the natural host

Medicago sativa, both of which developed characteristic symptoms therefore suggesting a pathogenic

nature of the disease. Consistent with symptomatology, the virus was renamed to alfalfa vein mottling

virus. A name Alvemovirus was proposed for the new genus in the family *Potyviridae*, of which alfalfa

vein mottling virus is a tentative member.

Keywords: plant viruses; positive-strand RNA viruses; *Potyviridae*; alfalfa vein mottling virus;

Alvemovirus; alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.).

Introduction

Research on alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.), a major forage crop worldwide, greatly benefited from the

latest advances in high throughput sequencing (HTS) technologies that enabled the completion of its

genome assembly [1] revealing new insights into the mechanisms of the crop's resistance to abiotic and

biotic stresses [2,3,4,5], identification of genetic markers associated with important agronomic traits

[6,7,8] and discovery of numerous microorganisms infecting alfalfa, primarily viruses [9-12]. Viruses were

found to be an integral part of multi-pathogenic infections collectively forming the alfalfa pathobiome, a

diverse community of pathogenic microbes within the biotic environment of the plant [13,14]. Recently,

during the initial seed screenings of alfalfa germplasm accessions maintained by the USDA ARS National

Plant Germplasm System (NPGS), we have detected a broad range of viruses in the mature seeds of

different germplasm sources [15]. Among them were fragments of a poty-like virus with a genomic

organization typical for *Potyviridae* that shared ~ 26%-32% identity with a few members of the family.

Therefore, the virus was provisionally named alfalfa-associated potyvirus 1 (AaPV1), [15]. In the present

study, aimed at surveying alfalfa varieties grown in the U.S. to identify, characterize, and prevent the

spread of novel and emerging viruses in the country, AaPV1 was found in plant samples collected from

commercial alfalfa fields in Arizona, USA. A coding-complete genome of the virus was assembled from

overlapping sets of contigs and a phylogenetic relationships with other members of the family

Potyviridae were established. The virus was further categorized as a novel species, tentatively related to

the genus *Ipomovirus* and potentially representing a new genus in the family *Potyviridae*. Consistent with

symptomatology in the natural host *Medicago sativa* L., the virus was designated as **al**falfa **ve**in **mo**ttling

virus (AVMV), a representative member of a new taxon, provisionally named Alvemovirus.

Materials and Methods

Plant material

Five alfalfa plants (stems and leaves) were sampled from each of the four different fields, 10-15 acres in

size, located in Yuma Country, Arizona, USA. Geographic coordinates of the alfalfa fields and the

adjacent crops are shown in Table 1.

Total RNA extraction, RNA sequencing, RT-PCR, and 5'RACE

Five leaves were pooled from each of the 20 plants for RNA extraction. Total RNA was extracted using

Promega Maxwell® RSC Plant RNA Kit (Promega Corp., Fitchburg, WI) according to the manufacturer's

directions. cDNA libraries were prepared using Illumina TruSeq Stranded Total RNA with the Ribo-Zero

Library Prep Kit (Illumina Inc., San Diego, CA USA) and RNA sequencing was performed by Psomagen

(Psomagen Inc., Rockville MD USA) on a NovaSeq6000 S4 platform (150PE, 1Gb, 20 million total reads).

Reverse transcription–polymerase chain reactions (RT-PCR) were performed using the SuperScript One-

Step RT-PCR System according to the manufacturer's directions (Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., Waltham,

MA USA) or utilizing SuperScript™ III First-Strand Synthesis System Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham,

MA USA) following by PCR amplification with AmpliTaq Gold DNA Polymerase Thermo Fisher Scientific).

Total RNA was extracted using TRIzol Reagent (Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., Waltham, MA USA).

Negative control reactions were performed with RNA obtained from uninfected *N. benthamiana* or with

sterile RNAse-free water processed for cDNA preparation the same way as RNA extracted from the

infected alfalfa plants. Three virus-specific sets of primers were designed based on the results of the HTS

analysis: 1) LN1077/LN1078 (forward, 5' CTCCCTTTGGTACTCGGTATTG, 3', pos. 7679-7701 and reverse,

5' CTCTAATGTGCGGACCTTTCT 3', pos. 8072-8093, size 414 bp); 2) LN1079/LN1080 (forward, 5'

TGACAGCGAGTTCTCATTCC 3', pos. 9165-9184, and reverse, 5' GTCAGTCAAACCAGCCTTTATTC 3', pos.

9800-9822, size 658 bp); 3) LN1095/LN1096 (forward, 5' CCAGGGTGTTGTTGATGATTTG 3', pos. 4176-

4197, and reverse, 5' TCTCAGTCACATTCCGCATAAA 3', pos. 4579-4600, size 425 bp). PCR products were

either sequenced directly or cloned into the TOPO II vector (Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., Waltham, MA

USA) and sequenced. 5'RACE was performed with SMARTer RACE 5'/3' Kit (Takara Bio USA, Inc. San Jose,

CA USA) according to the manufacturer's directions.

Bioinformatic analysis

A schematic representation of the bioinformatics pipeline used in this study is shown in **Fig.1**. Briefly,

sequence reads were first trimmed using Trimmomatic [16], followed by their assembly with SPAdes

[17]. The resulting contigs were screened using BLASTx searches [18] against a virus database containing

all   plant   virus   protein   sequences   from   the   NCBI   RefSeq   database

(https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/refseq/). The potential plant viral hits were searched once again using

BLASTx against the full NCBI nr protein database. BBMap [19] was used to generate sequencing

coverage values for the identified contigs. For the prediction of cleavage sites for viral proteases,

polyproteins from 109 different members of the family *Potyviridae* were aligned by four different

Multiple Sequence Alignments (MSA) software applications: ClustalW, ClustalO, MUSCLE, and CLC

Genomics Workbench 23, very accurate setting (QIAGEN LLC, Germantown MD USA). Cleavage sites

obtained by each MSA method were compared and the most likely sites were selected by another

comparison with previously reported consensus sites [20].

Phylogenetic analysis

Phylogenetic analysis was performed with polyproteins from selected members of the family

Potyviridae. Sequences were aligned with Clustal W and the unrooted tree was built with RAxML-NG

[21] using the maximum likelihood algorithm, a maximum of 1000 bootstrap replicates, and

bootstopping (autoMRE, cutoff: 0.030000). Boostrapping converged after 150 replicates.

Mechanical inoculation of *Nicotiana benthamiana* Domin. and alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.)

plants

Symptomatic leaves from field alfalfa plants were homogenized in cold 20 mM potassium phosphate

buffer, pH 7.0, using a sterile mortar and pestle. The resulting suspension was briefly centrifuged to

precipitate plant debris and ten microliters of the supernatant were rubbed onto carborundum-dusted

leaves of three-weeks old *N. benthamiana* plants using sterile inoculating loops. Carborundum-dusted

leaves of the three weeks-old seedlings of two alfalfa cultivars, cv. CUF 101 and cv. Maverick, were rub-

inoculated with purified viral preparations using sterile inoculating loops.

Virus purification

The virus was partially purified from 20 grams of symptomatic *N. bentamiana* leaves using a protocol

developed for *Poinsettia mosaic virus* [22].

Transmission electron microscopy

For transmission electron microscopy (TEM), TEM grids were incubated on the drop of purified viral

preparation for 2 minutes, rinsed with one milliliter of sterile water and stained with 1%

phosphotungstic acid (PTA) solution. The grids were examined in a Hitachi H-7700 Electron Microscope

at the Electron and Confocal Microscope Unit, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.

Western blot assays

Western blots (WB) were performed as previously described [23]. Membranes were probed with

polyclonal antiserum to sweet potato mild mottle virus (SPMMV; DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany) using

the company's recommended dilution (1:1000).

Results

Symptoms displayed on the infected alfalfa plants

According to the results of HTS, eight out of 20 plants examined (40%) originating from three different

alfalfa fields, were infected with the virus resembling AaPV1. These plants displayed a variety of virus-

like symptoms including mottling, chlorosis, vein clearing, and bright yellow blotches (**Fig. 2**). The

symptoms were likely triggered by multiple co-infecting pathogens, including the virus in question [14].

Viral genome assembly and structure

Assembled contigs generated from each of the eight plants exceeded 9-10 kb in length and represented

variants of the same virus (**Table S1**). The longest contig with 4940 x per-nt average coverage consisted

of 10,323 nucleotides (nt) and included a poly (A) tail, thus indicating that the 3'-terminal portion of the

viral genome is complete. Multiple 5'RACE reactions demonstrated that the HTS-derived length of the

viral genome is 10,037 nt, excluding the poly(A) tail (75 nt). According to the sequenced 5'RACE PCR

products, the 5' non-coding region of the virus contains 107 nt; an open reading frame (ORF) encoding a

large polyprotein comprises 9,732 nt (108-9,839 nt); and the 3' non-coding region of the virus appears

complete, encompassing 198 nt (9,840-10,037) without the poly (A) tail.

In a PSI-BLAST search, the top three hits for the viral polyprotein (excluding AaPV1 submissions) were:

eggplant ipomovirus A (GenBank ID: BCG55390.1; 32.8% identity, query cover 78%; E-value=0.0); the

roymovirus, rose yellow mosaic virus (GenBank ID: BBI90117.2; 31.6% identity; query cover 87%; E-

value=0.0); and *Potyvirus* spp. polyprotein (GenBank ID: QHB15167.1; 31.3% identity, query cover 85%;

E-value=0.0). Among other hits were squash vein yellowing virus (genus *Ipomovirus*; GenBank ID:

AEV45694.1; 34,4% identity; query cover 65%, E-value=0.0); chili ringspot virus (genus Potyvirus;

GenBank ID: APW85806.1; 28.7% identity; query cover 79%; E-value=0.0), and numerous species from

different genera of the family *Potyviridae*.

The InterPro tool for functional analysis of proteins [24], predicted nine protein domains in the viral

ORF: Potyviridae P1 protease domain (IPR002540); Helper component proteinase domain (PR001456);

Protein P3 of potyviral polyprotein (IPR039560); Superfamilies 1 and 2 helicase ATP-binding type-1

domain (IPR014001); Superfamilies 1 and 2 helicase C-terminal domain (IPR001650; Potyviridae

polyprotein domain (IPR013648); Potyvirus NIa protease (NIa-pro) domain (IPR001730); Viral RNA-

dependent RNA polymerase domain (IPR001205); and Potyvirus coat protein domain (IPR001592). The

tentative genome structure of the virus and predicted cleavage sites, obtained by multiple alignment of

109 different potyvirids, are shown in **Fig. 3**.

The virus does not appear to have a highly conserved $G_{1-2} A_{6-7}$ motif preceding overlapping PIPO ORF

characteristic for *Potyviridae* and located within the P3 cistron [25], Instead, there is an A_7 motif, which

is embedded in the overlapping ORF, presumably (according to the ORF Finder;

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/orffinder/) starting at the position 3122 nt (+3 ORF relative to the

polyprotein) and followed by 63 codons with a termination codon TGA at pos. 3311-3313.

Phylogenetic analysis

Phylogenetic analysis deduced from the alignment of the viral polyprotein and representative

polyproteins of different members of the family *Potyviridae*, clustered the virus into a distinct outgroup,

branching from the genus *Ipomovirus* (**Fig. 4**). This concurs with the significant divergence of the viral

genomic and amino acid sequences from other members of the genus and likely indicates that the virus

should be classified as member of a new, not yet established, genus in the family *Potyviridae.*

Mechanical transmission to *N. benthamiana* plants

Since potivirids are readily transmissible mechanically

(https://ictv.global/report/chapter/potyviridae/potyviridae), we attempted mechanical transmission of

the virus to *N. benthamiana*, a common indicator host for diagnosis of many plant viruses [26] (Hull,

2002). *N. benthamiana* plants mechanically inoculated with sap produced from infected alfalfa leaves,

developed distinct symptoms two-three weeks post inoculation. The resulting symptoms could be

visually characterized as chlorosis, mottling, and chlorotic lesions spots on non-inoculated leaves. The

infected plants were also stunted compared to healthy control plants (**Fig. 5**). The infection of *N.*

bentamiana plants was additionally confirmed by RT-PCR assay with primers LN1095/96 developed

based on the HTS data and specific for the virus (**Fig.6**). The amplicon was of the correct size predicted

by the analysis of the HTS-derived assembly and Sanger sequencing verified it is a fragment of the virus.

Transmission electron microscopy of the purified viral preparations

Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) can provide reliable information on particle dimensions and

morphology, based on which a virus can be placed to a particular taxonomic group [27]. TEM

examinations showed that the virions were flexuous filaments with a modal length of 800-1050 nm and

the modal diameter of about 11–13 nm (**Fig.7**). This morphology is indicative of the members of the

family *Potyviridae* and the larger particle length is consistent with the viruses of the genus *Ipomovirus*.

Mechanical transmission to alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.) plants

Among several plants of two inoculated alfalfa cultivars, only a single plant of cv. CUF 101 developed

obvious symptoms ~ 20 days post mechanical inoculation. Symptoms consisted of mottling and vein

yellowing (**Fig. 8**). The symptomatic plant was tested, and the infection confirmed by RT-PCR assay with

two different sets of primers developed based on the HTS data and specific for the virus (**Fig.9**). PCR

products were sequenced and matched the virus in question.

Serological examinations

In Western blot (WB) assays, virus-infected tissues did not react with broad spectrum monoclonal

antibodies (Abs) to potyviruses (PTY 1), [28], (results not shown). However, they appeared to weakly

cross-react with polyclonal antisera to SPMMV (DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany) when an indirect WB

assay was used (membranes were probed with primary Abs to SPMMV followed by secondary Ab-

alkaline phosphatase conjugate) was used. This reaction was accompanied by a high background and

non-specific reactivity, common for indirect serological detection protocols (**Fig. S1A**). When membranes

were probed with SPMMV primary Abs conjugated with AP (direct assay), the only reactive band was

derived from the purified viral preparation, likely due to the large concentration of the viral coat protein

rather than to cross-reactivity with SPMMV antiserum. No cross-reactivity was observed with virus-

infected plant tissues (**Fig S1B**). This experiment indicated a possible distant serological relationship

between the novel virus and a type species of the genus *Ipomovirus*. Although the percent amino acid

identity between the SPMMV CP and presumptive CP of the alfalfa ipomovirus is quite low (31%) and is

far below the identity necessary for classification into the genus *Ipomovirus*, the latter may possess some

epitopes recognized by the SPMMV polyclonal Abs.

Discussion

We report here the identification and characterization of a new virus infecting alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*

L.) and belonging to the family *Potyviridae*. Genomic fragments of the same virus were previously found

in mature alfalfa seeds [15]. Since they shared some homology (~30%) to several potyvirids from

different genera of the family, the virus was provisionally named alfalfa-associated potyvirus 1 (AaPV1)

[15].

In this study, based on the complete genome sequence and structure, phylogenetic relationships, TEM

observations, symptomatology on its primary agricultural host, and in part by serological cross-reactivity,

we propose a more descriptive name for the virus, alfalfa vein mottling virus (AVMV). Additionally, our

results indicate that AVMV should be reclassified as a novel species related to but distinct from viruses of

the genus *Ipomovirus*. Furthermore, distinct clustering of AVMV in the phylogenetic tree and low identity

levels with other members of the genus *Ipomovirus* suggest that alfalfa vein mottling virus likely

represents a new species of a unique taxon most closely related to the genus *Ipomovirus*. We propose

this new genus be named Alvemovirus.

The characteristic symptoms caused by the virus on indicator plant *Nicotiana benthamiana* and on its

agricultural host alfalfa, confirm pathogenicity of AVMV on these host species. Successful mechanical

inoculation of *M. sativa* with virus purified from the indicator plant followed by RT-PCR detection of the

AVMV in mechanically inoculated alfalfa, satisfies Koch's postulates and establishes the virus as cause of

the symptoms observed on *M. sativa* plants.

Viruses of the genus *Ipomovirus*, to which AVMV is presumably related but distinct, infect a wide range

of hosts, including economically important crops such as tomato, cucumber, melon, squash, sweet

potato, watermelon, and others. To our knowledge, ipomoviruses or closely related viruses have not

previously been identified from alfalfa. Our findings indicate that *M. sativa* can be a natural reservoir for

the AVMV and thus, considering its possible relationship to ipomoviruses, which are transmitted by

sweetpotato whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*), it is possible that AVMV is also whitefly-transmitted and could

infect other crops growing in the vicinity. Therefore, further studies will examine incidence of AVMV in

additional regional crop and/or weed species and the potential for AVMV transmission by *B. tabaci*.

Since all alfalfa samples used in this study were collected within 100 m of the melon fields in an area

with exceptionally high populations of the whitefly, *B. tabaci* MEAM1, (**Table 1**), further testing this

melon would likely clarify the virus origin and host range.

Funding information

224 This study was supported by the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service

225 (CRIS number 8042-21000-300-00D) and partially by the National Plant Disease Recovery System

226 (NPDRS) grants to LGN.

Author contributions

228 Conceptualization: LGN. Sample collection and evaluation: JCP and WMW; Methodology: OAP, LGN, SG.

229 Data analysis: SG and LGN. Experimentation: LGN and OAP. Writing – original draft preparation: LGN.

230 Writing – review and editing: all authors.

Data Availability Statement

The genomic sequence of the alfalfa vein mottling virus has been deposited in GenBank on 08/24/2023 under the accession number OR483877.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Chen H, Zeng Y, Yang Y, Huang L, Tang B, et al. Allele-aware chromosome-level genome assembly and efficient transgene-free genome editing for the autotetraploid cultivated alfalfa. *Nat Commun* 2020; 11: 2494.

2. Postnikova OA, Shao J, Nemchinov LG. Analysis of the alfalfa root transcriptome in response to salinity stress. *Plant Cell Physiol* 2013; 54:1041–1055.

3. Postnikova OA, Hult M, Shao J, Skantar A, Nemchinov LG. Transcriptome analysis of resistant and susceptible alfalfa cultivars infected with root-knot nematode *Meloidogyne incognita*. *PLoS One* 2015;10(3): e0123157.

4. Nemchinov LG, Shao J, Lee MN, Postnikova OA, Samac DA. Resistant and susceptible responses in alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) to bacterial stem blight caused by *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *Syringae*. *PloS One*. 2017;12(12): e0189781.

5. Vieira P, Mowery J, Eisenback JD, Shao J, and Nemchinov LG. 2019. Cellular and transcriptional responses of resistant and susceptible cultivars of alfalfa to the root lesion nematode, *Pratylenchus penetrans. Front Plant Sci* 2019; 10:971.

6. Yu, L-X, Zheng P, Bhamidimarri S, Liu X-P, Main D. The impact of genotyping-by-sequencing pipelines on snp discovery and identification of markers associated with verticillium wilt resistance in autotetraploid alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.). Front Plant Sci 2017; 8:89.

7. Yu L-X, Zhang F, Culma CM, Lin S, Niu Y, et al. Construction of high-density linkage maps and

identification of quantitative trait loci associated with verticillium wilt resistance in

autotetraploid alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.). *Plant Dis* 2020; 104(5):1439-1444.

8. Lin S, Medina CA, Boge B, Hu J, Fransen S, et al. Identification of genetic loci associated with

forage quality in response to water deficit in autotetraploid alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.). *BMC

Plant Biol* 2020;20(1):303.

9. Bejerman N, Roumagnac P and Nemchinov LG. High-throughput sequencing for deciphering the

virome of alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.). *Front Microbiol* 2020; 11:553109.

10. Nemchinov LG, Irish BM, Grinstead S, Shao J, Vieira P. Diversity of the virome associated with

alfalfa (Medicago sativa L.) in the U.S. Pacific Northwest. *Sci Rep* 2020; 12(1):8726.

11. Jiang P, Shao J and Nemchinov, L. G. Identification of emerging viral genomes in transcriptomic

datasets of alfalfa (Medicago sativa L.). *Virol J* 2019; 16, 153.

12. Nemchinov LG, Grinstead SC, Mollov DS. Alfalfa virus S, a new species in the family

Alphaflexiviridae. *PLoS One*; 2017. 12 (5), e0178222

13. Vayssier-Taussat M, Albina E, Citti C, Cosson JF, Jacques MA, Lebrun MH, et al. Shifting the

paradigm from pathogens to pathobiome: new concepts in the light of meta-omics. *Front Cell

Infect Microbiol* 2014; 4:29.

14. Nemchinov LG, Irish BM, Uschapovsky IV, Grinstead, Jonathan Shao J, and Postnikova OA.

Composition of the alfalfa pathobiome in commercial fields. *Front Microbiol* 2023; 14:1225781.

15. Nemchinov LG, Irish BM, Grinstead S, Postnikova OA. 2023. Characterization of the seed virome

of alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L). *Virol J* 2023; 20(1):96.

16. Bolger AM, Lohse M, and Usadel B. Trimmomatic: a flexible trimmer for Illumina sequence data.

Bioinformatics 2014; 30: 2114–2120.

17. Bankevich A, Nurk S, Antipov D, Gurevich A, Dvorkin M, et al. SPAdes: A new genome assembly

algorithm and its applications to single-cell sequencing. *J Comput Biol* 2012; 19: 455–477.

18. Altschul SF, Gish W, Miller W, Myers EW, Lipman DJ. Basic local alignment search tool. *J Mol Biol*

1990; 215:403-10.

19. Bushnell, B. BBMap: A fast, accurate, splice-aware aligner. 9th Annual Genomics of Energy &

Environment   Meeting,   Walnut   Creek,   CA,   USA.   2014.

https://www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/1241166.

20. Goh CA and Hahn, Y. Analysis of proteolytic processing sites in potyvirus polyproteins revealed

differential amino acid preferences of Nia-Pro protease in each of seven cleavage sites. PloS One.

2021; 16(1): e0245853.

21. Kozlov AM, Darriba D, Flouri T, Morel B, Stamatakis A. RaxML-NG: a fast, scalable and user-

friendly tool for maximum likelihood phylogenetic inference. *Bioinformatics* 2019; 35: 4453–

4455.

22. Lesemann DE, Koenig R, Huth W, Brunt AA, Phillips S, Barton RJ. Poinsettia mosaic virus: A

tymovirus? *Phytopath Z* 1983; 107:250–262.

23. Nemchinov LG and Natilla A. Transient expression of the ectodomain of matrix protein 2 (M2e)

of avian influenza A virus in plants. *Protein Expr Purif* 2007; 56:153-9.

24. Paysan-Lafosse T, Blum M, Shuguransky S, Grego T, Pinto BL, et al. InterPro in 2022. *Nucleic Acids*

Res 2023; 51(D1): D418-D427.

25. Chung BYW, W Miller WA, Atkins JF, Firth AE. An overlapping essential gene in the Potyviridae.

Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A 2008; 105:5897-902.

26. Hull R. Matthews' Plant Virology. Fourth edition, Academic Press. 2002.

27. Bhat AI and Rao GP. 2020. Electron Microscopy and Utramicrotomy. In: Characterization of plant

viruses. Methods and Protocols. Humana Press, New York, NY U.S.A. p.173-185.

28. Jordan R, J Hammond J. Comparison and differentiation of potyvirus isolates and identification of

strain-, virus-, subgroup-specific and potyvirus group-common epitopes using monoclonal

antibodies. *J Gen Virol* 1991; 72; (Pt 1):25-36.

Figure legends

Figure 1. Bioinformatics pipeline

Figure 2. Diverse symptomatology of alfalfa plants in the field. **A**, asymptomatic plants. **B-D**, plants

displaying different virus-like symptoms.

Figure 3. Tentative genome structure of the new virus infecting alfalfa. Black arrow heads indicate

putative cleavage sites in the polyprotein. P1: protein 1 protease; P3: protein 3; PIPO: Pretty Interesting

Potyviridae ORF (Chung et al. 2008); 6K1: 6 kDa peptide 1; CI: cylindrical inclusion; 6K2: 6 kDa peptide 2;

VPg: virus protein genome-linked; Nia-Pro: nuclear inclusion a protease; NIb: nuclear inclusion b, RNA-

directed RNA polymerase; CP: coat protein.

Figure 4. Phylogenetic relationships of alfalfa vein mottling virus with other members of the family

Potyviridae. The unrooted tree was deduced from the Clustal W alignment and built with RaxML-NG [18]

(Kozlov et al. 2019) tool using maximum likelihood algorithm, 1000 bootstrap replicates and

bootstopping (autoMRE, cutoff: 0.030000).

Figure 5. Symptoms developed on *Nicotiana benthamiana* plants after mechanical inoculation with

AVMV-infected alfalfa. **A**, uninfected *N. benthamiana* plant. **B-D**, symptomatic plants.

Figure 6. RT-PCR assay with total RNA extracted from symptomatic *Nicotiana benthamiana* plants. Virus-

specific primers used in the assay were developed based on the HTS data. **M**, 1 Kb Plus DNA Ladder

(Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA USA). **1**, RT-PCR amplicon obtained from the virus-infected plant

using primer pair LN1095/LN1096. **2**, no RT-PCR amplicons were obtained from the uninfected *N.*

benthamiana plants.

Figure 7. Transmission electron microscopy photograph of partially purified viral preparations.

Magnification: 30,000. Scale bar: 500 nm.

Figure 8. Symptoms developed on leaves of alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.) cv. CUF101 after mechanical

inoculation with partially purified viral preparations.

Figure 9. RT-PCR assay with symptomatic leaves of mechanically inoculated alfalfa plants. **M**, 1 Kb Plus

DNA Ladder (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA USA). **1**, PCR amplicon obtained from the

symptomatic leaves of alfalfa cv. CUF101 using primer pair LN1077/LN1078. **2**, no PCR amplicon was

obtained from control reaction using the same primers. **3**, PCR amplicon obtained from the symptomatic

alfalfa leaves using primer pair LN1079/LN1079. **4**, no PCR amplicon was obtained from control reaction

with the same primers.

Table 1. Geographic locations of alfalfa fields.

Table S1. Different viral contigs generated from each of the eight plant samples infected with the virus.

Figure S1. Western blot assays with polyclonal antibodies specific to sweet potato mild mottle virus

(SPMMV). **A: M**, ColorBurst protein marker (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO USA); **1**, virus-infected tissues

of *Nicotiana benthamiana*; **2**, uninfected tissues of *N. benthamiana*; **3**, mechanically inoculated,

symptomatic tissues of alfalfa; **4**, uninfected alfalfa sample; 5, partially purified viral preparation. **B: M,**

ColorBurst protein marker (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO USA); 1-4, virus-infected *N. benthamina* and

alfalfa leaf tissues; 5 and 6, healthy *N. benthamina* and alfalfa leaf tissues; 7, partially purified viral

preparation.

355 **Table 1.** Geographic locations of alfalfa fields

Alfalfa fields, №	GPS coordinates		Adjacent crops	№ of plants collected
24E	32° 40' 56.58"N	114° 13' 42.72"W	Cantaloupe, lettuce, cauliflower	5
32E	32° 42' 38.62"N	114°05' 28.21" W	Cantaloupe, cauliflower, spinach	5
43E	32° 47' 11.44"N	113° 54' 15.81"W	Cantaloupe, lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower	5
51E	32° 46' 42.26"N	113° 45' 20.89"W	Cantaloupe, lettuce	5

Figure 1

389
390

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

417
418

Figure 6

500nm

440
441

Figure 7

448
449 **Figure 8**

Figure 9

473