Protection of bacteriophage-sensitive Escherichia coli by lysogens

Stanley Brown, Namiko Mitara, and Kim Sneppen

Bacteriophage λ is a temperate virus infecting the bacterium Escherichia coli. Temperate phages have the ability to form lysogens where the prophage is maintained in the infected bacterium in a largely quiescent state. The lysogen becomes immune to superinfection by λ by blocking the development of the superinfecting phage. Here we report the λ lysogen not only protected itself from killing by λ phages but also protected λ-sensitive bacteria in mixed culture. This protection required that the lysogen was able to adsorb the superinfecting λ phages. The protection was also sensitive to the growth state of the mixed culture, and the λ lysogen lost efficiency in protecting λ-sensitive bacteria as it stopped growing. A mutant of the λ tail protein, λJ, was not subject to this loss of protection. Adsorption of λ having the wild-type J protein but not the mutant λJ protein to E. coli was inhibited by interference with bacterial energy metabolism. The last observation suggests wild-type λ preferentially infects bacteria with competent energy metabolism.

Significance

Some viruses that infect bacteria, temperate bacteriophages, can confer immunity to infection by the same virus. Here we report λ-immune bacteria could protect λ-sensitive bacteria from killing by phage λ in mixed culture. The protection depended on the extent to which the immune bacteria were able to adsorb the phage. Reconciling modeling with experiment led to identifying a decline in protection as bacteria stopped growing. Adsorption of λ was compromised by inhibition of bacterial energy metabolism, explaining the loss of protection as bacterial growth ceased.

Results

Protection of Phage-Sensitive Bacteria. We infected a mixed population of sensitive bacteria, S3137, and immune bacteria, S3207, with λcIb221 at a low initial multiplicity of infection (MOI = 0.003). We allowed the infected, mixed cultures to grow to saturation.

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LamB greatly reduces the ability of the immune hosts to protect surviving S3137 (blue on indicator agar) among a total of 2204◦

Properties are those of colonies formed at 37◦

Fig. 1. Fates after infection by λ. (A) On infecting a sensitive E. coli, λ+ (wild-type) can follow one of two developmental pathways. In both cases, the phage chromosome (purple) enters the bacterium and circularizes. If it follows the lytic pathway, it replicates its chromosome, produces the proteins for the viral capsid, assembles the progeny phages, and lyses the infected bacterium, releasing the progeny phages. If it follows the lysogenic pathway, it integrates into a specific location in the bacterial chromosome (blue), and λ repressor (red), the product of the λ0 gene, accumulates, blocking further phage development. (B) Pathways followed when λcI, λ harboring a cI mutation, infects nonlysogens (Left) or λ lysogens (Right). (Left) When λcI infects a nonlysogen, it cannot establish repression and can only enter lytic development. (Right) If λcI infects a λ lysogen, the CI proteins in the cytoplasm block λ development. The superinfecting phage is silenced, and its DNA is not replicated but is diluted randomly between the daughter cells during bacterial growth.

Under these conditions in uninfected mixed cultures, S3137 increased, on average, 930-fold. Our standard conditions are described in Materials and Methods. The properties of the bacterial strains that allowed distinguishing them in mixed cultures are summarized in Table 1. The majority of S3137 bacteria survived when S3207 as the immune strain represented 98% or more of the initial mixed population. There was low or no detectable survival of S3137 when S3207 represented 95% or less of the initial mixed population (Fig. 2). The data shown in Fig. 2 with S3207 representing the immune bacteria were a compilation of five independent experiments.

The observed protection of λ-sensitive bacteria was dependent on the ability of the immune bacteria to adsorb the virus. In the experiments shown in Fig. 2, when immune bacteria able to adsorb the virus were replaced with S3222, none of the sensitive bacteria survived. S3222 is isogenic to S3207 but unable to adsorb the virus (SI Appendix, Table S5) due to its failure to produce LamB (5, 6). That is, we failed to detect any colonies formed by surviving S3137 (blue on indicator agar) among a total of 2204 colonies formed by S3222 (white on indicator agar). Thus, loss of LamB greatly reduces the ability of the immune hosts to protect the sensitive hosts.

Measurement of R0. The protection of sensitive bacteria by immune bacteria bears conceptual similarity to herd immunity in human disease (8, 9). To understand the observed degree of community protection we measured the reproduction number, R0, or how many bacteria in a fully susceptible population will be infected by viruses released from an infected bacterium. To measure R0 of λ infections directly we used a modified phage, λS3069 (Fig. 3A). Since λS3069 had lower infectivity than λcIb221, we later corrected for the relative infectivity of the two phages.

Our measurements of R0 used a primary case lysogen, S3136, that harbored λS3069 as its prophage. λS3069 encodes a temperature-labile λ-repressor, CI857 (10, 11). When the temperature is increased, the resident mutant prophage enters lytic development (Fig. 3A). λS3069 also carries both a gene for ampicillin-resistance and a ColE1 origin for DNA replication. The ColE1 origin is silent in S3136 because S3136 does not produce DNA polymerase I (12).

Since S3136 does not produce LamB, we expected no loss of released phage due to binding of the primary case host. Thus, following temperature shift, the released phages can only infect the secondary case strain, S3207. In S3207 the endogenous λ-repressor blocks viral development and replication from the λ origin. However, the ColE1 origin can replicate the circularized infecting phage. Therefore, in S3207, the infecting phage genome, although silenced for phage development, was not diluted through bacterial growth and was able to confer resistance to ampicillin. The R0 was now measured by counting the number of S3136 colony-forming units (CFU) prior to raising the temperature and the subsequent appearance of transductants of S3207 as ampicillin- and temperature-resistant CFUs (Fig. 3A and Materials and Methods).

From Fig. 3B it is seen that after a time delay of about 60 min from the temperature shift the density of ampicillin-resistant bacteria at 37◦C first rose rapidly with an apparent generation time of 6 min. As doubling times for E. coli are much longer (13), we interpreted this first, rapidly rising stage as the accumulation of newly transduced S3207. By ~100 min, the concentration of ampicillin-resistant bacteria began to rise more slowly.

Table 1. Properties of recipient bacterial strains after infection with the phages at 37◦C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strain (alias)</th>
<th>Infected with λcIb221</th>
<th>Infected with λS3069</th>
<th>Infected with λcI857</th>
<th>Colony color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S3137 (sensitive)</td>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3207 (immune)</td>
<td>Phage binds, does not kill</td>
<td>Phage binds, does not kill</td>
<td>Phage binds, does not kill</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3222 (LamB−)</td>
<td>Phage does not bind</td>
<td>Phage does not bind</td>
<td>Phage does not bind</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Properties are those of colonies formed at 37◦C. Colony color is that on an indicator agar. ampR indicates resistance to ampicillin.
sensitive fraction of the populations. The filled circles show the observed

Methods added phage were sampled immediately, diluted, and spread on indicator
agar to determine the sensitive fraction of the population (Materials and
Methods). Cultures with and without added phage were grown overnight
before dilutions were spread on indicator agar to determine the surviving
sensitive fraction of the populations. The filled circles show the observed
fractions of sensitive bacteria (S3137) surviving infection with λcI857 in
mixed populations with lambda-immune bacteriа (S3207). The initial fractions
of sensitive bacteria were binned as unit percent ± 0.5 through 5%. Samples
with an initial fraction of sensitive bacteria from 6 to 9% were binned as a
single group. Within each bin the surviving fraction is shown with the dark
band marking the error bars on this average survival. The crosses show data
where sensitive bacteria were mixed with bacteria isogenic to S3207 but
unable to adsorb λ (S3222).

The last time point in the rapidly rising stage of the experiment
was taken at 98 min after the temperature shift. A least squares
fitting of the later time points of experiment 1 can be described as
690 × 2(Δt/28). At 98 min this represents 7,800 CFU/mL (Fig. 3B, dashed line); 7,800 CFU/mL secondary case infections divided by the initial 870 30°C ampicillin-resistant primary case

![Image](https://www.pnas.org/)

Fig. 2. The fractions of surviving λ-sensitive bacteria (y axis) as function of initial fractions of sensitive bacteria (x axis). If infected, λcI857 was added to the mixed populations at an MOI of ~0.003. The cultures without added phage were sampled immediately, diluted, and spread on indicator agar to determine the sensitive fraction of the population (Materials and Methods). Cultures with and without added phage were grown overnight before dilutions were spread on indicator agar to determine the surviving sensitive fraction of the populations. The filled circles show the observed fractions of sensitive bacteria (S3137) surviving infection with λcI857 in mixed populations with lambda-immune bacteriа (S3207). The initial fractions of sensitive bacteria were binned as unit percent ± 0.5 through 5%. Samples with an initial fraction of sensitive bacteria from 6 to 9% were binned as a single group. Within each bin the surviving fraction is shown with the dark band marking the error bars on this average survival. The crosses show data where sensitive bacteria were mixed with bacteria isogenic to S3207 but unable to adsorb λ (S3222).

The increase of ampicillin-resistant colonies after 99 min in
Fig. 3 was not only due to the growth of earlier formed trans-
ductants. We measured new transductants after the 99 min time
point and found they represented additional infections by ~3.6
per primary case over the next cell generation (SI Appendix).
Therefore, the resulting total secondary infections per primary
case, R0, of λs3069 rose to between 12.6 and 14.3.

The herd immunity experiments used λcI852, a different
phage from λs3069. To convert transduction of ampicillin resist-
ance by λs3069 to infections of λcI852 we measured two prop-
eties of the phages. First, λs3069 transduced ampicillin resistance
at 68% the efficiency it formed plaques (SI Appendix, Fig. S2).
Second, the burst size for λs3069 was 36% that of λcI857 as
measured by plaque-forming units (PFU) per CFU (SI Appendix).
The combined corrections raised the total R0 of 12.6 to 14.3
determined with λs3069 to an R0 of 52 to 59 for λcI852.

In herd immunity literature, an immune fraction of 1 − 1/R0
is often considered to be the herd immunity threshold. Above this
threshold, further infections will eventually cease in a population
cf of constant total size (reviewed in ref. 8). However, the latency
time of λ is about twice the doubling time of sensitive bacteria (SI Appendix, Fig. S5); hence, in the experiments summarized in
Fig. 2 the phage had only five rounds of infection. Thus, even
the maximum R0 of 59 for λcI852 is too small to explain the observed killing of sensitives in Fig. 2.

Herd Immunity during Exponential Growth. The first herd
immunity assay we used allowed the bacteria to grow to stationary
phase. We had noticed that at the end of exponential growth, the
immune strain, S3207, slowed more rapidly than the sensitive
strain, S3137, in mixed cultures (SI Appendix, Fig. S4B). As our
measurements of infection were conducted while the bacteria were
in exponential growth, we examined the protection of sensitive
bacteria by immune bacteria while both strains remained in ex-
ponential growth. The experiment was performed as in our above
herd immunity experiments (Fig. 2), but in addition to collecting
initial and stationary phase samples we collected samples during
growth of the mixed cultures. The results of these experiments are
shown in Fig. 4. As expected, with less growth and thus fewer
cycles of infection, less killing was observed.

In addition to the corrections to the measurement of R0 we
measured the relative infectivity the two strains to λ (SI Appendix).
In exponential growth, λs3069 generated 1.7 times as many
ampicillin-resistant transductants of a λ-immune derivative of
S3137 as of S3207. Also, as S3137 and S3207 formed colonies
different colors, in each set of experiments we monitored the
growth rates of the two strains in mixed, uninfected cultures.

Incorporating the above corrections to the measure of R0 and
the relative infectivity of the two strains, we observed protection
of the sensitive strain similar to that predicted by our model (see
Mathematical Modeling of Herd Immunity) and shown in Fig. 4.
Although our measurements and model described the protection
of the sensitive strain in exponential growth, we emphasize our
observation of approximately threefold greater killing of the sensi-
tive strain when the infected mixed cultures were allowed to enter
stationary phase.

Mathematical Modeling of Herd Immunity. Our goal is to
understand the processes within and between the bacteria that

![Image](https://www.pnas.org/)

Fig. 3. Determination of R0. (A) Schematic description of the measurement. (B) The x axis is minutes after temperature shift, and the y axis is the number of ampicillin-resistant bacteriа at 37°C in CFU per donor CFU (30°C ampicillin-resistant CFU prior to temperature shift). Results from experiment 1 are shown as squares and from experiment 2 as circles. The solid line suggests exponential growth of ampicillin-resistant bacteria with a doubling time of 28 min in the later part of experiment 1. Prior to 99 min, the rapid rise of ampicillin-resistant bacteria is assumed to be due to new acquisition of the ampicillin-transducing phage. The dashed lines indicate the extrapolation for the range of initial R0 values (see Measurement of R0). Experiment 1 was initiated with 870 CFU/mL S3136 and experiment 2 with 700 CFU/mL S3136.
The results of three independent experiments are shown. The experiment initiated with S3137 representing 9% of the total CFU is shown with squares, 11% of the total CFU with circles, and 12% of the total CFU with triangles. Model predictions are shown with lines. The average doubling time of S3207 was 28.6 min and of S3137 was 24 min in these experiments. The x axis represents generations of S3137 (sensitive strain). The y axis represents the ratio of sensitive bacteria surviving with phage divided by the fraction of sensitive bacteria surviving without phage at each time point. Both experiments and simulation were initiated with λcIb221 added to an MOI of 0.003. The simulation assumed a phage latency time equal to 2.1 doubling times of the sensitive strain and initial bacterial density of $1.4 \times 10^7$ cells/mL. The line colors represent the initial fraction of sensitive hosts (purple, 9%; green, 11%; cyan, 12%). Growth beyond 10 generations is indicated by a gray area since the cells would enter the stationary phase.

To describe the observed protection of sensitive bacteria and incorporate the growth properties described above, we used the ordinary differential equations that are commonly used to analyze population dynamics in broth culture (14, 15), as well as models applying epidemiology concepts to phage–bacteria interaction (7, 9, 16, 17). Our model assumes the following:

1) The bacteria grow exponentially at a constant rate $g_S = \log(2)/24$ min, and the immune lysogens grow exponentially at $g_L = \log(2)/28.6$ min (Fig. 4).

2) A free phage particle infects a host cell at a constant rate per phage per sensitive host, $\eta_S$, and per immune host, $\eta_L$ (mL/min). $\eta_L$ was measured as $6.5 \times 10^{-10}$ mL/min ($SI$ Appendix, Fig. S6) and $\eta_S \sim 1.7 \times \eta_L$ ($SI$ Appendix).

3) If a sensitive host is infected by a phage, there is a latency period before cell lysis, and $\beta$ new phage particles are produced. The latency time has average $\tau_1$ and follows an Erlang distribution [the interval distribution created by a sequence of steps that happens at a constant rate (18)]. $\tau_1 = 2.1 \times \log(2)/g_S$ min, and the shape parameter $M = 8$ of the Erlang distribution is obtained by fit to experiment ($SI$ Appendix, Fig. S5).

A similar model was employed to analyze infections of mixed populations containing the CRISPR/Cas system (7). The main differences here from their model are that 1) our model employs a latency time distribution fitted to the experimental observation, 2) the sensitive host and the immune host have different growth rates, and 3) the infection rates differ between host types. The detailed model description is given in $SI$ Appendix.

We carefully measured the time course of infections and translated this to an effective $R_0$. Our $R_0$ primarily reflects the burst size $\beta$, but since our measurement only takes into account transductants up to a certain time it will not include all released phages. Nevertheless, we found that $\beta \approx 59$, a value consistent with the observed total $R_0$, gives the best fit to the infection time course data ($SI$ Appendix, Fig. S7). This value was used for the primary attempt to fit the herd immunity experiment. In $SI$ Appendix, Fig. S8, we simulated how the time course of appearance of newly infected cells depends on the initial host concentration.

The model was applied to the time course of herd immunity in exponentially growing cells (Fig. 4). We see that the discrepancy is quite small, indicating that the model with the measured parameters is consistent with the infection time course in exponential phase.

Reconciling Results from Exponential Growth and Entry into Stationary Phase. We were able to model the observed herd immunity if the bacteria remained in exponential growth (Fig. 4). However, our model, represented by the line in Fig. 5, failed to describe the observed herd immunity to λcIb221 if the bacteria were allowed to continue to stationary phase (closed symbols in Fig. 5). That is, protection of sensitive bacteria by immune bacteria declined after departure from exponential growth. A set of observations may suggest a mechanism.

LamB from wild-type E. coli freed from the bacterium binds reversibly to $\lambda^+$ (19). In mixed cultures the immune strain stopped growing shortly before the sensitive strain ($SI$ Appendix, Fig. S4). LamB hyperdiffuses in growing E. coli (20), and the hyperdiffusion ceases on energy depletion (21). First, we assumed the absence of hyperdiffusion of LamB on nongrowing E. coli would cause it to behave as when freed from the host. As the culture stopped growing, binding to the immune bacteria could become reversible.

SI Appendix

Fig. 5. Herd immunity test with λcIb221 (filled symbols) and λh, λcIb221(J10837) (open symbols). The solid line is the theoretical prediction using the model and the parameters used for Fig. 4. As in the experiment depicted in Fig. 1, the mixed cultures were allowed to grow to saturation with and without added phages. In these experiments, S3137 increased on average 520-fold in uninfected cultures, thus using about one less host generation time than Fig. 2. Squares are from experiment 1, and circles are from experiment 2. The line represents simulations obtained of survival after nine generations in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4. Time course of herd immunity. Mixed cultures of the $\lambda$-sensitive strain, S3137, and the $\lambda$-immune strain, S3207, were kept in exponential growth ($Materials and Methods$). The lines are from three independent experiments. The experiment initiated with S3137 representing 9% of the total CFU is shown with squares, 11% of the total CFU with circles, and 12% of the total CFU with triangles. Model predictions are shown with lines. The average doubling time of S3207 was 28.6 min and of S3137 was 24 min in these experiments. The x axis represents generations of S3137 (sensitive strain). The y axis represents the ratio of sensitive bacteria surviving with phage divided by the fraction of sensitive bacteria surviving without phage at each time point. Both experiments and simulation were initiated with λcIb221 added to an MOI of 0.003. The simulation assumed a phage latency time equal to 2.1 doubling times of the sensitive strain and initial bacterial density of $1.4 \times 10^7$ cells/mL. The line colors represent the initial fraction of sensitive hosts (purple, 9%; green, 11%; cyan, 12%). Growth beyond 10 generations is indicated by a gray area since the cells would enter the stationary phase.

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Table 2. Energy dependence of adsorption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiment (MOI)</th>
<th>Host strain</th>
<th>Ratio unbound λcIb221</th>
<th>λh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (0.002)</td>
<td>S3207</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (0.015)</td>
<td>S3207</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (0.010)</td>
<td>S3222</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S3207</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S3222</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Energy dependence of adsorption. Exponential-phase bacterial cultures were washed and resuspended with buffer. The washed bacterium was preincubated with either added glucose or added sodium azide plus potassium arsenate. Phages were added at the indicated MOI, and incubation continued for 10 min. The adsorption mixes were centrifuged, and the phages remaining in the supernatant were quantified as PFU (25). The concentration of phages in the arsenate plus azide supernatant divided by the concentration in the glucose supernatant is presented. Detailed methods and results are in SI Appendix. The λh mutant was λcIb221 J(J1083T).

Discussion

We tested the possibility of a biased infection in two ways. First, LamB homologs from other bacteria like Shigella (6, 22) and λ host range mutants [λh (19, 23, 24)] bypass the reversible binding step to purified LamB. To examine the possible involvement of the reversible binding step we isolated a λh mutant, λcIb221 J(J1083T) (Materials and Methods), and repeated the herd immunity experiment allowing the cultures to reach stationary phase. The λh mutant, shown as open symbols in Fig. 5, behaved very differently from its parent and closer to the behavior predicted by our simulations.

Second, we asked if phage adsorption was sensitive to energy depletion of the host bacteria. We measured adsorption of λcIb221 to the immune strain, S3207, in the absence of azide and arsenate, the same inhibitors of metabolism that blocked hyperdiffusion of LamB (21) (SI Appendix). The results are summarized in Table 2. For λcIb221, removal from a postcellular supernatant, that is, binding to LamB+ bacteria, was sensitive to the inhibition of energy metabolism. This sensitivity was lost with the λh mutant and if the LamB− bacterium, S3222, replaced S3207.

Materials and Methods

Strains. Bacterial strains are all derivatives of E. coli K12 and are listed in Table 3. Strains S3207 and S3222 are derived from MC4100 (31) with the λ-gal constellation from ref. 32. We used this defective prophage to provide immunity for two reasons. First, the rex-gal deletion removes genes essential for λ development and prophage excision preventing the immunity from being transmissible to the sensitive strain. Second, loss of the λ lef operon, a site removed by the

Table 3. Strains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strain</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HO480</td>
<td>F- polA1(Am) lysA (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3136</td>
<td>As HO480 (S3069) (11) but fhuA and λvir −</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3137</td>
<td>F- lacI* metA endA hsrd17 supE44 thi1 relA gyrA96 fhuA, as S1754 (29) but fhuA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3207</td>
<td>F- araD139 Δ(argF-lac)169 fhuA5310 Δ (fruK-yeiR)725 [fruA25] relA1 rpsL150 rbsR22 Δ (fimB-fimE)632 [:IS1] deoC1 fhuA (λexo::gfp) Δ (rex-gal::Kan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3222</td>
<td>As S3207 but λvir +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>λcIb221</td>
<td>λcI E722, Δatt b221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>λh</td>
<td>As λcIb221 but J(J1083T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>λi857</td>
<td>Encodes a thermodilable repressor (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>λS3069</td>
<td>λcI857 XbaI::pBluescript KS- (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>λvir</td>
<td>λcI2, ν1v3 (30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
deletion, results in overproduction of CI (33). Strains failing to produce LamB were isolated as spontaneous λvir + Mal− mutants as described (5), except maltose utilization was determined with MacConkey agar base supplemented with 0.5% wt/vol maltose.

Phage strains are all derivatives of λpapa (25). λ strains are described in Table 3 and in greater detail in SI Appendix.

λchb21 J(I1083T) was isolated as a spontaneous λ mutant of λchb21 as described (34). The phage still required LamB for infection as it could not form plaques on a strain deleted for lamB. Since sequenced λ mutants fall between codons 1040 and 1127 (35) of the 1,132 codon λ gene, we sequenced the last 30% of J from the λ mutant parent and the sole nucleotide change was in codon 1083.

Media. Bacteria were grown in YT broth (36) or on M63 agar (37). Indicator agar was M63 supplemented with 1 mM thiamine, 0.2% glucose, 0.2% decolorized casamino acids, 20 μg/mL L-methionine, 0.2 mM isoproply β-D-thiogalactoside, and 40 μg/mL 5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl β-D-galactoside. When indicated, sodium ampicillin was added to YT agar to a final concentration of 5 mM MgSO4. The phages were titrated in F-top (36) supplemented with 10 mM MgSO4 over a supplemented t-agar (36, 38) (0.8% Tryptone, 0.5% NaCl, 0.1% yeast extract, 5 mM MgSO4, 1% agar).

Infection of Mixed Populations. We initiated each experiment from an independent single colony by inoculating 2 mL of YT broth and growing with aeration overnight at 30 °C. The next day, a saturated culture of S3137, a λ-sensitive strain, was diluted 100-fold, and a saturated culture of a λ lysogen, strain S3207 or S3222, was diluted 10-fold into YT broth supplemented with 5 mM MgSO4. S3207 is λ-immune, and λ can bind to its surface and inject its DNA. S3227 is identical to S3207 but fails to produce LamB, and λ cannot bind to its surface. The diluted cultures were mixed such that each mix received 1 mL diluted S3207 or S3222, 0.1 to 1 mL diluted S3137, and YT 5 mM MgSO4 to a total volume of 5 mL. The mixed cultures were incubated with aeration at 37 °C for ~40 min. Next, 0.5 mL of the mixed cultures was diluted 10-fold into YT broth supplemented with 5 mM MgSO4 and with or without 2 × 10^6 PFU of λchb21 for an average MOI of ~0.003. Samples of the cultures lacking phage were immediately diluted 10^4 -fold into M63 salts, and 100 μL was spread onto indicator agar. On this agar, S3137 forms blue colonies, and both S3207 and S3222 form white colonies (SI Appendix, Fig. S1). The plates were incubated at 37 °C, and blue and white colonies were counted the next day. The remainder of the broth cultures were incubated with aeration overnight at 37 °C. The next day, the saturated cultures were diluted 10^4 -fold in M63 salts and 50 μL spread onto the above M63-based indicator agar and incubated at 37 °C. Blue and white colonies were counted.

Herd immunity during exponential growth was examined similarly except the mixed cultures were sampled during growth, and various dilutions were spread on indicator agar to monitor bacterial growth and survival (Fig. 4).

Measurement of R0. Cultures of the primary case bacterium, S3136, a λysogen harboring AS3069 as a prophage, and the secondary case bacterium, S3207, were grown overnight with aeration in YT broth at 30 °C. The next day they were each diluted 10-fold into YT broth supplemented with 5 mM MgSO4 and incubated 50 min with aeration at 30 °C. To remove any free phages, 1 mL of the diluted S3136 was further diluted into 9 mL M63 salts and the bacteria sedimented at 2,200 × g, 5 min at room temperature. The supernatant was decanted and the bacteria resuspended with 10 mL YT 5 mM MgSO4 and diluted 1,000 fold with the same. Both 0.1 mL of the washed and diluted S3136 culture and 0.1 mL of the dilided S3207 culture were added to 4.8 mL YT with 5 mM MgSO4 for a 10,000-fold excess of S3207. Control cultures of S3136 and S3207 alone were also prepared. A sample of the mixed culture was spread onto YT agar supplemented with 50 μg/mL ampicillin and incubated at 30 °C overnight. All cultures were incubated 5 min in a 40 °C water bath with shaking and then incubated further at 37 °C with aeration. Samples were withdrawn over time and spread on YT agar supplemented with 50 μg/mL ampicillin and incubated at 37 °C overnight. Colonies were counted the next day. The 37 °C, ampicillin-resistant, Lac− colonies only appeared with the mixed cultures.

Data Availability. All study data are included in the article and/or SI Appendix.

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