CLAIMS

1. An isolated herpesvirus which is a member of the family of Alloherpesviridae, and which in its wild-type form causes a disease in Asian sea bass which is characterised by the following signs: onset of clinical signs around 3 days after challenge, generalized skin lesions leading to darkened skin with pale patches and fin erosions, lethargy with observed loss of swimming equilibrium, inappetence, increase in opercular respiration rate, and occurrence of mortalities about 2 weeks after challenge characterised in that in the DNA of the virus, at least 95% of the open reading frames have at least 80% sequence identity with the corresponding open reading frames of the DNA having a sequence according to SEQ ID NO:1.

2. An isolated herpesvirus which is a member of the family of Alloherpesviridae, which virus has at least one of the identifying characteristics of the virus deposited under Accesion Number **CNCM I-5118** at the Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganisms (CNCM), Institut Pasteur, Paris, France.

3. An isolated herpesvirus according to claim 2, characterised in that the identifying characteristics are chosen from the group consisting of:

- the virus having a DNA sequence that over its full length is at least 70% identical to the sequence according to SEQ ID NO:1;
- the virus in its wild type form causes disease in Asian sea bass which is characterised by the following signs: onset of clinical signs around 3 days after challenge, generalized skin lesions leading to darkened skin with pale patches and fin erosions, lethargy with observed loss of swimming equilibrium, inappetence, increase in opercular respiration rate, and occurrence of mortalities about 2 weeks after challenge;
- the virus comprising a Major Envelope Protein (MEP) gene having a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 2;
- the virus comprising a dUTPase gene having a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 4;
- the virus comprising a Terminase gene having a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 6;
- the virus comprising a Polymerase gene having a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 8.

4. An isolated herpesvirus which is a member of the family of Alloherpesviridae, and which in its wild-type form causes a disease in Asian sea bass, characterised in that the virus has DNA wherein at least 95% of the open reading frames have at least 80% sequence identity with the corresponding open reading frames of the DNA having a sequence according to SEQ ID NO:1.

5. An isolated herpesvirus comprising a Major Envelope Protein (MEP) gene, characterized in that:

a) the virus is a member of the family Alloherpesviridae
b) the virus causes disease in Asian sea bass
c) the nucleotide sequence of the MEP gene has a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 2.

6. An isolated herpesvirus comprising a dUTPase gene, characterized in that:

a) the virus is a member of the family Alloherpesviridae
b) the virus causes disease in Asian sea bass
c) the nucleotide sequence of the dUTPase gene has a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 4.

7. An isolated herpesvirus according to claim 5 or 6, wherein the virus comprises the Major Envelope Protein gene and the dUTPase gene characterized in that the nucleotide sequence of the MEP gene has a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 2 and the nucleotide sequence of the dUTPase gene has a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 4.

8. An isolated herpesvirus comprising a Major Envelope Protein (MEP) gene, characterized in that:

a) the virus is a member of the family Alloherpesviridae
b) the virus causes disease in Asian sea bass
c) the MEP gene reacts in a PCR reaction with a primer set as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 21 and 22 to give a PCR product of 277 +/- 10 base pairs.

9. An isolated herpesvirus comprising a dUTPase gene, characterized in that:

a) the virus is a member of the family Alloherpesviridae
b) the virus causes disease in Asian sea bass
c) the dUTPase gene reacts in a PCR reaction with a primer set as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 23 and 24 to give a PCR product of 346 +/- 10 base pairs.

10. An isolated herpesvirus comprising a Terminase gene, characterized in that:

a) the virus is a member of the family Alloherpesviridae
b) the virus causes disease in Asian sea bass
c) the Terminase gene reacts in a PCR reaction with a primer set as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 25 and 26 to give a PCR product of 585 +/- 10 base pairs.

11. An isolated herpesvirus comprising a Polymerase gene, characterized in that:

a) the virus is a member of the family Alloherpesviridae
b) the virus causes disease in Asian sea bass
c) the Polymerase gene reacts in a PCR reaction with a primer set as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 27 and 28 to give a PCR product of 314 +/- 10 base pairs.

12. A DNA fragment comprising a gene encoding a Major Envelope Protein characterized in that said gene has a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence of the MEP gene as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 2.

13. A Major Envelope Protein characterized in that said MEP has an amino acid sequence that is at least 70% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:3.

14. A DNA fragment comprising a gene encoding a dUTPase characterized in that said gene has a level of identity of at least 80% to the nucleotide sequence of the dUTPase gene as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 4.

15. A dUTPase characterized in that said dUTPase has an amino acid sequence that is at least 70% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:5.

16. DNA fragment having an open reading frame having a length of at least 100

nucleotides, wherein the DNA has at least 80% sequence identity with an open reading frame of the DNA that has a sequence according to SEQ ID No. 1.

17. A protein encoded by the DNA fragment of claim 16.

18. A cell culture comprising a replication competent virus, characterized in that said culture comprises the herpesvirus according to any of claims 1-11.

19. A diagnostic test kit for the detection of antibodies reactive with a virus according to any of claims 1-11 or with antigenic material thereof, characterised in that said test kit comprises a virus according to any of claims 1-11 or antigenic material thereof.

20. A diagnostic test kit for the detection of a herpesvirus according to any of claims 1-11 or antigenic material thereof, characterised in that said test kit comprises antibodies reactive with a virus according to any of claims 1-11 or with antigenic material thereof, or a PCR primer set as defined in any of the claims 8-11.