

December 30, 1950.

Dr. Robert S. Breed,  
Editor, Bergey's Manual,  
New York State Experiment Station,  
Cornell University,  
Geneva, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Breed:

May I call your attention to a rather blatant error in the description of the so-called "Phagus testabilis" H., on p. 1138 of the 6th edition of Bergey's Manual. The specific name given arises from fallacious reasoning from false premises. If your staff will consult the references given, e.g., Cowles, J. Bact., 20: 15-23, I think that you will find that the experimental results are precisely contradictory to those cited in the Manual.

While specificities of host range and of the character of the lesions may well admit the application of binomial nomenclature for plant and animal viruses, it is doubtful that such an effort is very useful for bacteriophages. The names border on the ludicrous, and a numbering system lacking implications of generic and specific distinctions would provide a better scaffolding for organizing the useful factual summaries.

Yours very sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg,  
Associate Professor of Genetics.