

Hot Summer News

Security Alert

August 2005

LA Trifecta of Infecta

In the past few months several things came up that I thought should be brought to your attention. Here is a security medley to touch on what's out there. Here is a serious warning for you Netscape users, a new Pope email scam on the horizon, and a Google mistype attack that will have you searching for answers.

Netscape Flaw

The first of our troublesome triad is the Netscape exploit. This was brought to light at the end of April by the security company Secuna, who said that this thing was so bad that the fix was to use a different browser. Wow! This was partly due to the fact that there was no fix for the browser, but a Netscape representative said that version 8, which is still in beta, can be downloaded and is not susceptible to this exploit.

If a Netscape user finds themselves on a site specially crafted to exploit Netscape's flaw there is almost nothing you can do. The hacker can then execute the code of their choice and ultimately take control of your PC. So if you're a Netscapien then you should think about using another browser just until there is an official patch. You can also try their new version 8, which, as I said, is still in Beta.

Netscape 8.0 beta

<http://channels.netscape.com/ns/browsers/default.jsp>

The Google? Attack

Some of you may have heard about this or have even witnessed it on your own. It's when you go surfing and mistype a word and come up with an alternative search portal or other kooky site that throws non-stop ads in your face and spawns yet more when you try to close them out. You eventually have to shut the

browser because all your doing is putting out fires.

Now picture that about 100 times worse and instead of pop-ups annoyances you have a host of Trojans waiting to besiege your system. Google.com may not mean anything to you, but it does to some Russian hackers who thought the brilliant idea of creating a trap for people who, for one reason or another, misspell Google. Since the "K" is right next to the "L" on the keyboard it really is easy to "Fat Finger" the keys end up down this road.

This Cyber-Jacking isn't new, but using one of the web's brightest stars as your bait is. Not only will just visiting the site infect you, but also there are two pop-ups that link out to other infectious sites. These sites will put everything from downloaders, proxies, and droppers on you machine. Infection also takes away any chance of updating your anti-virus software—if you use McAfee or Norton.

The exploit takes advantage of all browsers, so don't feel safe just because you use FireFox or Opera. For the most part these attacks appear to be going after personal information that may be stored on the PC: usernames, passwords, social security numbers, bank account info. This makes the situation that much more dire.

This is not a new trick and your bound to see more of it. If you think that you have inadvertently visited a bogus site with all

sorts of download notifications and pop-up that just don't stop, shut down your browser and clean out your PC. Do a manual anti-virus update and run it, along with your favorite anti-spyware—don't be surprised if you see some junk in your system.

Pope Spam

The last of the three deviants is Spam that uses the Pope's name to get you to click on the link. Spammers always look to reach the numbers, and what better way to do this than to take something huge out of the news and use it as a cloak to attack unaware recipients. Free books about, or written by, the late Pope are being offered and they can be all yours just follow the link. Other spam messages stated things such as building a Cathedral in the pope's name but donations were needed—then a click invitation if you want to help. You know, your run of the mill spam.

The best practice is to just delete these or any suspicious emails for that matter. If you are truly interested in a book by or about the Pope, you can go to Amazon and find it yourself, not buy it from a dubious email.

Well, that's it for this month.. Until next time...

Stay safe out there

Phony Better Business Bureau Scam

Looking for a jet-ski or maybe searching for a new car online? Visited any online auctions or personals looking for a big-ticket item lately? If this sounds like you then you want to listen up.

There's a new scam out there preying on those looking for more expensive items online. The scam that I am speaking of uses the Better Business Bureau logo and name to give potential victims a "Good Feeling" about the transaction that's about to happen. Instead, the transaction doesn't happen and that person is out some serious cabbage.

Here's how the whole thing plays out. The attacker replicates legitimate auction items off any number of online sites and posts it like it's for sale on their site. When a potential buyer

attempts to pay for the item they get a reply saying that this transaction will be handled by the "Better Business Insurance Program" which is described as the new BBB online payment system (it does not actually exist). Next you get an email that appears to be an invoice from the BBB describing how they will hold the money until the transaction is complete and that you need to wire the money to some overseas bogus BBB account. Of course once this happens the war is over—the jet-ski you were looking forward to riding is never coming.

This to me is an obvious scam. I wouldn't wire money to anybody I don't know, especially overseas. Don't let your eagerness get the best of you. Check out websites before you engage in any transactions. You may even want to go to the BBBonline and see what BBB has to say about the

merchant. Check for the REAL BBB online reliability icon at any merchant site and click it to make sure it is for real. Try to contact the person direct either by email or preferably phone.

The BBB emphasizes that they...

DO NOT operate a "Better Business Bureau Insurance Service", nor a "BBB Auto Buyers Protection Program".
ARE NOT a "preferred insurance provider" for eBay or any other entity.
DO NOT manage financial transactions for online merchants.
DO NOT issue profiles or reports on individuals;
BBBs report on businesses.

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Let MTM take care of your computers so you can take care of your business

What Pets Bring to the Party



Like deities and tax law, your beloved pet works in mysterious ways. Science can't explain the power of the pooch or the Karma of the kitty, but numerous studies have shown that furry companions just by their presence can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, raise chances of survival after a heart attack, reduce loneliness and depression and spread all-around good cheer.

Any owner will tell you how much joy a pet brings. For some, a critter provides more comfort than a spouse. A 2002 study by Karen Allen of the State University of New York at Buffalo measured stress levels and blood pressure in people—half of them pet owners—while they contended with performing 5 minutes of mental math or holding a hand in ice water. Subjects completed the tasks alone, with a spouse, a close friend or with a pet. People with pets fared best. Those tested with their animal pals had smaller spikes in blood pressure and returned most quickly to baseline heart rates. With pets in the room, people also made fewer math errors than when figuring in front of spouses or friends. In another study, Allen put a group of hypertensive stockbrokers on blood-pressure-lowering drugs and told half of them to adopt a pet. Six months later, the new pet owners showed less than half the blood-pressure surge of their peers while performing stressful tasks—and, again, made fewer math errors. It seems people feel less nervous around pets, says Allen, who thinks it may be because pets don't judge.

In part, it's that capacity for unconditional support that makes pets such good company. A study reported last fall suggests that having a pet dog not only buoys your spirits but it may also help you trim your gut. Researchers at Northwestern Memorial Hospital spent a year studying 36 portly people and their equally pudgy dogs on joint diet-and-exercise programs; a separate control group of 56 people without pets was put on a solo program. On average, people lost about 11 lbs., or 5% of their body weight. Their canine sidekicks did even better, losing an average of 12 lbs., more than 15% of their body weight. Pup owners didn't lose any more weight than the pup-less but, say researchers, got more exercise overall—mostly with their dogs—and found it rewarding instead of a chore.



No scientific study has deconstructed exactly why pets boost our wellbeing, but for most pet lovers that probably doesn't matter. It's enough to know that like many of the other basic joys in life, a pet's affection is simple, easy and mercifully unconditional.



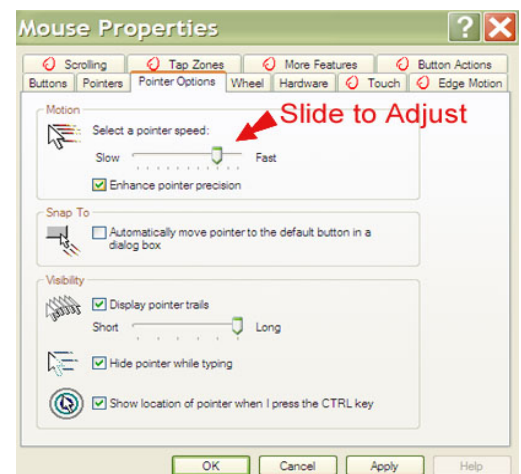
LIVEN UP YOUR MOUSE

Adjusting the speed of your mouse pointer and buttons can help liven up your mouse.

Open **Mouse** in the **Control Panel** (click **Start**, **Control Panel**, **Printers and Other Hardware**, and then **Mouse**)

Under **Buttons**, you can adjust the double-click speed to your preference. Just slide the Speed setting left or right to adjust. (NOTE: If you use an optical mouse with Windows XP, your interface and options may vary. You may need to search around for this feature).

On the **Pointer Options** tab, under **Motion**, drag the slider make the mouse faster or slower.



While you're in Mouse Properties, look around at the other cool stuff that might be available to personalize your mousing experience.