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RFID Viruses: Your Cat is Safe

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RFID Viruses: Your Cat is Safe

AIM RFID Experts address virus claims

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President
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A technical paper published during a conference yesterday, 15 March, in Pisa, Italy, titled "Is your Cat Infected with a Computer Virus?" claims that RFID tags can be used to corrupt databases and even potentially to spread computer viruses.

Many of the basic assumptions in the paper overlook a number of fundamental design features necessary in automatic data collection systems and good database design. In other words, the researchers built a system with a weakness and then proceeded to show how the weakness could be exploited. Not surprisingly, poor system design, whether capturing RFID tag information, bar code information or keyboard entered data will create vulnerabilities.

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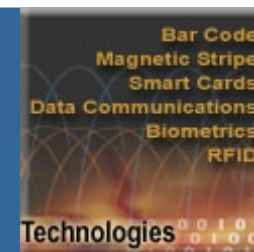
AIM recognizes the efforts of the team from Vrije University and the academic community in general to bring such issues forward, but the methodology of this particular research is questionable.

RFID scientists and experts from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) were meeting in Kyoto, Japan this week with the leadership of the AIM Global (Association for Automatic Identification and Mobility) RFID Experts Group as part of our ongoing effort to provide standards and implementation guidance fielding RFID systems.

In response to this paper, these experts emphasize that there are two broad types of RFID tags, ones that have pre-encoded or fixed data and ones that have data that can be changed. Systems with fixed data such as those used to identify pets cannot be changed and therefore are immune to infection by a virus. So RFID animal tags are safe for your pets and cannot spread data viruses.

Here are a few specific attributes in RFID systems that can protect the overall system:

- Most applications of RFID, including EPC Gen2, look for specific kinds of data. Poor reader design might allow the reading of an unrecognized tag, but a good system will verify that data against pre-defined parameters, as do current bar code systems, and any code not in the database will typically be ignored.
- Being able to insert a virus into the system implies a tag contains executable code that is recognized by the software. This is simply not possible with many applications of RFID since they look for specific kinds of data and will either flag or reject anything that doesn't fit the data template.
- Protection is a common process today in data transfer between computer systems and writable media. Global standards and commercial products are created to ensure that there is adequate data security, much the same way that running current virus software prevents virus attacks to your home computer. Data collection system designers are aware that they must install, and have already installed, methods to authenticate any data into their



software.

Critical advancements in information processing and logistics made possible RFID technology cannot be underestimated. Corporations, government agencies and consumers will enjoy greater confidence when they select standardized RFID technology because the associated security issues have been addressed and resolved by the world's leading experts.

AIM Global is a global network of companies with expertise in the field of automatic data collection. To reach an expert in your region simply email or call our office.

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