**SOPHOS**

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## Sophos calls for calm over "RFID viruses"

### Businesses should focus on the real risks, rather than be diverted by hype

Experts at SophosLabs™, Sophos's global network of virus, spyware and spam analysis centers, have advised users not to panic following media reports of a virus which infects RFID tags*.

A paper entitled "Is your cat infected with a computer virus?", written by a group from the University of Amsterdam, has theorized that it is possible for an RFID tag to carry a virus and, in exceptional circumstances, to spread via vulnerable RFID readers and middleware.



RFID chips are often carried by pet cats.

The semi-academic paper is full of assumptions that have to be realized before it is possible to create a virus that will use RFID tags to spread. It is worth mentioning that the virus code described in the paper works only on the environment constructed specially for the purpose by the authors of the paper and that there are no known vulnerabiltities like that in any real RFID middleware system.

"The researchers who wrote this paper failed to find a vulnerability in the RFID system for their virus to exploit. So they had to deliberately build a system with a problem for their virus to try and use to spread," said Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant for Sophos. "Any data storage device can carry virus code , but it doesn't necessarily mean that the virus would be able to spread successfully. In this instance, the researchers failed to show how an RFID virus could spread in the real world."

Sophos believes that businesses should focus on the real risks, rather than be diverted by hype. Organized criminal gangs behind virus and Trojan horse attacks are concentrating their financially motivated malware on the Windows platform.

"The sky is not falling, and no-one should be diverted from the important task of dealing with the very real risks posed by conventional viruses. Windows desktops and servers are the main battleground for viruses right now, not the aisles of the supermarket or at the vets when you get your pet cat chipped," continued Cluley.

* RFID tags are small chips that can carry a small amount of data, in order to replace barcodes often used in supermarkets and warehouses.

### About Sophos

Sophos is a world leader in integrated threat management solutions, developing protection against viruses, spyware, spam and policy abuse for business, education and government. Sophos's reliably-engineered, easy-to-operate products protect more than 35 million users in more than 150 countries. Through 20 years' experience and a global network of threat analysis centers, the company responds rapidly to emerging threats - no matter how complex - and achieves the highest levels of customer satisfaction in the industry.

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