

Guard Dog chases cookies before they reach you

By Joe Peschel

Wandering around the Web can be perilous, because many rogue sites abound with hidden hostile Java, Java Script, ActiveX, and other malicious applications. Guard Dog Deluxe, Version 1.0.2, from CyberMedia, aims to safeguard your Web treks and does so effectively.

I found Guard Dog more useful than Symantec's Norton Safe on the Web, which needs a lot more development before it's released.

I tested Guard Dog on Netscape Navigator 3.01, Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.02, and the Explorer-compatible internal browser found in America Online 3.0 for Windows 95. Unlike Norton Safe on the Web, Guard Dog warns you and asks you to confirm the action with any of these browsers. It not only warns about cookies but prevents them from being sent. When I went to sites that always attempt to send

cookies, Guard Dog immediately warned me and asked if I wanted to block the cookie, which I did. You can accept some cookies, if you prefer.

Guard Dog will also warn when a third-party site is attempting to send a cookie or trying to trace your browsing habits.

Warning about and blocking cookies is handy but trifling compared to accidentally visiting hostile Java and ActiveX sites. These sites can attempt to read your hard drive or, in the case of the ActiveX Exploder control, shut down your system. When I visited a site I knew was a home for hostile Java applications, Guard Dog immediately warned me and suggested I go elsewhere.

This utility recognizes when certain security breaches occur, but also relies on a database of

known sites that are home to hostile applications. Keeping that database current is going to be tough for CyberMedia, even though updates are available via its Oil Change area.

Guard Dog failed to detect hostile Java applets that manipulate Navigator and Explorer to the point where they lock up. My only recourse was to close the browser.

Guard Dog also lets you clear your cache and history files after you're done browsing. The program includes a slim virus-detection utility developed by Trend Micro. But the virus-detection component lacks the features of full-blown anti-viral utilities.

If CyberMedia enhances the included anti-viral utility with a few more features, Guard Dog could boost users' safety on the Web.

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THE BOTTOM LINE: VERY GOOD

Guard Dog Deluxe, Version 1.0.2

Guard Dog will protect you from cookies and hostile applications on the Web.

Pros: Warns when you enter known hostile sites; blocks cookies; clears the browser's cache and history logs; updates with CyberMedia's Oil Change.

Cons: Misses some hostile applications; virus-detection program is slight.

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Price: \$59.95

Platform: Windows 95.

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