

# virus

## BULLETIN

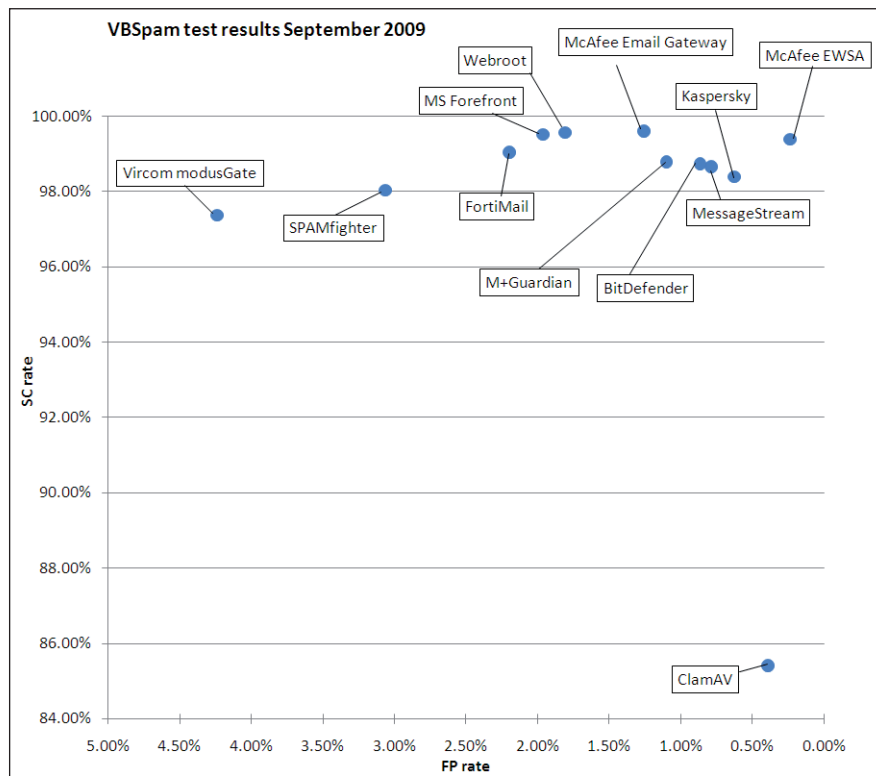
### EXCERPT FROM VIRUS BULLETIN ANTI-SPAM COMPARATIVE REVIEW, SEPTEMBER 2009

The September 2009 VBSpam comparative review saw an increase in the field of competitors for the third time in a row. Starting out with a modest six products on the test bench in the first test in May 2009, the September 2009 test saw that figure doubled, with a total of 12 products lined up on the bench. To date, there have been few other anti-spam tests with as many participating products.

The full test methodology can be found at <http://www.virusbtn.com/vbspam/methodology/>. Readers who

wonder about the relatively high false positive rates measured in our tests (compared with those seen in other tests and those claimed by the developers themselves) are advised to consult <http://www.virusbtn.com/virusbulletin/archive/2009/07/vb200907-vbspam> for explanation.

Finally, it should be remembered that the nature of this test is comparative, and as such it is important to note that it is not so much the absolute performance of a product that matters, but the relative performance compared to that of its competitors.



#### THE EMAIL CORPUS

The test ran from 16:45 h on 7 August 2009 to 08:00 h on 27 August 2009. The corpus consisted of all emails – ham and spam – sent to '@virusbtn.com' addresses mixed with a spam stream provided by Project Honey Pot. Emails from both sources were sent through the products in real time.

The VB corpus contained 1,275 ham messages and 19,401 spam messages sent to VB addresses, while the Project Honey Pot corpus contained 294,338 spam messages; these emails reflect the global nature of spam and the fact that different addresses and domains do sometimes receive different kinds of spam. The total combined corpus thus contained 315,014 messages.

#### AWARDS

The levels of the awards earned by products are defined as follows:



					Total spam			Project Honey Pot spam			VB corpus		
	True negative	FP	FP rate	FP/total VB corpus	False negative	True positive	SC rate	False negative	True positive	SC rate	False negative	True positive	SC rate
BitDefender Security	1264	11	0.87%	0.053%	3959	309780	98.74%	2099	292239	99.29%	1860	17541	90.41%
ClamAV	1270	5	0.39%	0.024%	45808	267931	85.40%	39954	254384	86.43%	5854	13547	69.83%
Fortinet FortiMail	1247	28	2.25%	0.135%	3014	310725	99.04%	2363	291975	99.20%	651	18750	96.64%
Kaspersky Anti-Spam	1267	8	0.63%	0.039%	5056	308683	98.39%	2907	291431	99.01%	2149	17252	88.92%
McAfee Email Gateway	1259	16	1.27%	0.077%	1244	312495	99.60%	394	293944	99.87%	850	18551	95.62%
McAfee Email & Web Security Appliance	1272	3	0.24%	0.015%	1927	311812	99.39%	1097	293241	99.63%	830	18571	95.72%
MessageStream	1265	10	0.78%	0.048%	4234	309505	98.65%	2922	291416	99.01%	1312	18089	93.24%
Messaging Architects M+Guardian	1261	14	1.11%	0.068%	3822	309917	98.78%	2350	291988	99.20%	1472	17929	92.41%
Microsoft Forefront	1250	25	2.00%	0.121%	1534	312205	99.51%	667	293671	99.77%	867	18534	95.53%
SPAMfighter Mail Gateway	1236	39	3.16%	0.189%	6184	307555	98.03%	4722	289616	98.40%	1462	17939	92.46%
Vircom modusGate	1221	54	4.42%	0.261%	8273	305466	97.36%	6814	287524	97.68%	1459	17942	92.48%
Webroot E-mail Security	1252	23	1.84%	0.111%	1377	312362	99.56%	553	293785	99.81%	824	18577	95.75%

- VBSpam Platinum for products with a total spam catch rate twice as high and a false positive rate twice as low as the average in the test.
- VBSpam Gold for products with a total spam catch rate at least as high and a false positive rate at least as low as the average in the test.
- VBSpam Silver for products whose total spam catch rate and false positive rates are no more than 50% worse than the average in the test.

The benchmarks for this test are then as follows:

- Platinum: SC 98.85%; FP 0.79%
- Gold: SC 97.70%; FP 1.58%
- Silver: SC 96.56%; FP 2.37%

The table above shows the scores for all of the products on test. The highlighted columns show the scores used for the benchmark calculations.

### McAfee Email Gateway (formerly IronMail)

**SC rate (total):** 99.60%

**SC rate (Project Honey Pot corpus):** 99.87%

**SC rate (VB spam corpus):** 95.62%

**FP rate:** 1.27%

**FP rate of total VB mail corpus:** 0.077%

McAfee Email Gateway appliance, previously known as both *Secure Mail* and *IronMail*, was originally developed by *Secure Computing*, which was bought by *McAfee* in 2008.

The product was set up easily using a web interface. I was particularly interested in seeing how well the product performed in the blocking of spam as this was the only product in the test that was configured to scan the contents of incoming email during the SMTP transaction and block those emails it was certain were spam. When done well, this can save a significant number of resources.

Helped by this two-layered blocking, the product's spam catch rate of 99.60% was higher than that of any other. The cost of this was a number of false positives though, including a few non-bulk emails, although it should be added that none of these were blocked at the SMTP level and would thus have ended up in the quarantine rather than being discarded outright. Moreover, the number of false positives was still below average, which means that *McAfee Email Gateway* debuts with a well-deserved VBSpam Gold award.



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