

# Trojan warriors threaten your homestead

by Bruce A. Love

**D**angerous invaders have arrived in the middle of the night unannounced and uninvited. Using ingeniously deceptive trickery, they have breached the fortress walls, previously thought to be impenetrable. The unsuspecting Trojan citizens who welcomed the towering wooden horse into their stronghold as a "gift," will now experience the destruction hidden inside this menace.

**T**he strategic success realized by the Greek soldiers, who made their way inside the walls of Troy by hiding in the belly of the Trojan Horse, has inspired similar military tactics ever since Homer first immortalized the Trojan Wars in his epic masterpiece, "The Iliad." Today, over 3000 years after Odysseus masterminded the plot, computer users worldwide continue to fall victim to attacks that are remarkably similar to tactics used by the Greeks in the battle for Troy. Trojan Horses, as well as viruses, worms, and other malicious software of modern times, are nearly as destructive as their wooden ancestral namesake.

**T**here are many forms of malicious software, or "malware," that plague computer users. In 2003, malware cost businesses approximately 55 billion dollars – that is nearly the cost to overthrow some third world dictators! Viruses are a form of malware that attach themselves to other programs and reproduce before performing their dastardly deeds. Viruses called Trojan horses, similar to the wooden one of old, are files that appear legitimate, but contain hidden code with bad intentions. Many spread through e-mail, or are downloaded from web sites, and can be designed to steal passwords, e-mail addresses (so it can spread further), and even credit card information.

**S**ome viruses act immediately. Others lie dormant until triggered by a specific date or action. While some viruses are merely annoyances, others can be quite harmful, erasing or corrupting files, or even causing your hard disk to require reformatting.

**W**orms are self-replicating viruses that do not alter files but consume so much of your computer's resources that they slow or halt all computer

activity. Spyware and browser hijackers are programs that change browser settings and alter default start and search pages. They are also the root of many pop-up ads. Some spyware produce numerous pop-up ads for pornography, redirect browsers to undesirable sites, and add dozens of bookmarks to your "favorites folder."

**V**iruses, including Trojan Horses and worms, can usually be avoided or removed by using anti-virus programs such as McAfee, Norton, or AVG (an excellent free program available from [www.grisoft.com](http://www.grisoft.com)). Each of these programs updates automatically so that your computer is inoculated daily against the 20 or so new viruses that are launched each day. Since spyware and browser hijackers are not technically viruses, they can only be removed by programs designed for this specific purpose. Try downloading a free program called Ad-Aware from Lavasoft ([www.lavasoft.com](http://www.lavasoft.com)) to eradicate these menaces. If that doesn't work, there are other low-cost spy-blasting programs available.

To guard against becoming infected, there are several rules you should follow:

- Do not download anything from sources you do not know and trust.
- Use up-to date antivirus software
- Always backup your important files
- Be wary of e-mails and websites of questionable character trying to get you to download attachments or free software.
- Make sure that everyone using your computer follows these rules!

By exercising these precautions you will greatly reduce the chances of exposing your computer to viruses.

**S**omeday, unless you completely abstain from e-mail and Internet activities, you will probably become infected. When you do, launch your updated Antiviral or spy-busting software against your intruder and watch with satisfaction as the enemy is destroyed! The next time a virtual skirt-clad Greek warrior bursts into your computer uninvited, you will be ready for him!

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