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Using Spamassassin with Slackware Linux

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1. Introduction

E-Mail spam is one of the major problems of the current internet. Fortunately there are some tools which can help you reducing the amount of spam you get. One of them is using blacklists. A blacklist is a list of known open e-mail relays. With a blacklist you can block e-mails which are sent using one of these open relays. Unfortunately there are a few problems with this method, first of all the database of open relays can never be complete. Besides that some spam is sent using normal ISP-specific SMTP servers.

Another method is scanning the incoming e-mails for common characteristics of spam. This method is comparable with a virus scanner; a filter program knows a large number of spam characteristics and gives each characteristic found in a mail a point. If a defined number of points is exceeded the mail is marked as spam. Spamassassin is that kind of filter.

2. Installing spamassasin

2.1. HTML::Parser

Spamassassin requires the HTML::Parser Perl package. The sources of this package can be downloaded from CPAN. You can get the latest version at the following URL: <http://search.cpan.org/dist/HTML-Parser/>. We want to install this package system-wide, so be sure to execute the following instructions as the root user (or only the **make install** step if you prefer). First of all you have to extract the source archive, for example:

```
# tar xzf HTML-Parser-3.33.tar.gz
```

In these examples you have to substitute the version number (3.33) with the version number of the package you downloaded. After extracting the archive go to the `HTML-Parser-3.33` directory and configure, compile and install HTML::Parser with the following commands:

```
# perl Makefile.PL
# make
# make install
```

Use **checkinstall make install** instead of the last command if you are using checkinstall to register the package.

2.2. SpamAssassin

After installing HTML::Parser the Slackware system is ready to configure and install Spamassassin. This first step is, as always, to download the sources. The SpamAssassin source can be downloaded from: <http://www.spamassassin.org/>. Extract the archive (use the version number of your SpamAssassin sources):

```
# tar xzf Mail-SpamAssassin-2.60.tar.gz
```

And go to the Mail-SpamAssassin-2.60 and execute the following commands:

```
# perl Makefile.PL PREFIX=/usr SYSCONFDIR=/etc
# make
# make install
```

The "PREFIX" parameter is used to make sure that the SpamAssassin files are installed under the /usr directory and the "SYSCONFDIR" parameter specifies that the configuration files should be stored in /etc.

2.3. Starting spamd

It is not a bad idea to start a daemonized version of SpamAssassin which runs in the background. This will speed up mail filtering. The daemon can be started using the following command:

```
# spamd -c -d
```

It is a good idea to add this to /etc/rc.local, so spamd will automatically be started during the initialization process.

3. Using spamassassin with procmail

Sendmail will use procmail automatically on the default Slackware installation if procmail is installed. Procmail is a program which processes e-mails and allows you to apply filters. At first we are going to have a look at how to add spamassassin headers to a processed e-mail, after that we are going to look at a method to separate spam from normal e-mail.

3.1. Marking messages as spam

The first step is to mark messages as either spam or non-spam. Create a /etc/procmailrc file, if you do not already have one. This is the system-wide procmail configuration file, and applies to all incoming e-mails. Use the ~/.procmailrc file if you want to enable spam marking for an individual account. Add the following lines to the configuration file:

```
:0 fw
* < 256000
| /usr/bin/spamc -f
```

The first line says we want to pipe all messages to an external command. The second line makes sure only messages smaller than 256000 bytes are filtered. Spam messages are usually not that large, and adding this

line can decrease the system load. Finally, the third line specifies that the messages should be piped through `/usr/bin/spamc` with the `"-f"` parameter.

3.2. Moving spam mail to a seperate mailbox

Procmail can also be used to move spam to a seperate mailbox file. It is not a bad idea to configure this on a user basis, because some users might want to use the filters of their e-mail program to seperate spam. In the following example we will move spam messages to the `~/mail/spam` mailbox file. To do this add the following lines to `~/procmailrc`:

```
MAILDIR=$HOME/mail

:0:
* ^X-Spam-Status: Yes
spam
```

First of all MAILDIR is defined, this will create and use the mailboxes in `~/mail/`. In the next two lines we say that we want to filter out e-mails with the "X-Spam-Status: Yes" header, which is added by spamassassin if it believes an e-mail is spam. Finally the mailbox to which the e-mails should be moved is specified.

4. Filtering in applications

4.1. KMail

If you haven't configured your MTA to filter incoming e-mail with SpamAssassin the first step is to configure KMail to do this. Filters can be created in KMail with the "Settings->Configure Filters" menu option. Create a new filter with the following options: select "Match any of the following". Select "<any header>" "contains" "." (a single dot) as the first criterium. Select "pipe through" as the filter action and fill in "spamc" in the input field. Make sure the "If this filter matches, stop processing here" option is disabled.

The filter that is configured above pipes each incoming e-mail through **spamc**. Now we can let KMail move spam mails to a seperate box automatically. Close the filter window and create a new folder named "Spam" in the local folders map. Reopen the filters window and add another filter. Select "Match any of the following". Select "<any header>" "contains" "X-Spam-Flag: YES". Make sure you use the same case, otherwise the rule will not match. Select "move to folder" "Spam" as the filter action. Finally click "OK" to accept the settings.

With these settings KMail marks spam using the **spamc** command and moves mails that contain the "X-Spam-Flag: YES" flag to a seperate spam folder.