

Dell laptop buyers make a stink over cat smell (Update)

October 31 2013, by Bree Fowler

A noxious feline odor has some Dell customers hissing.

People who own Dell Latitude 6430u laptops are complaining that their pricey new computers are emitting a smell similar to cat urine. Some of them said on the company's online customer forums that the odor seems to be coming from the keyboard or palm rest.

The Round Rock, Texas, company originally advised buyers through its forums to try cleaning their keyboards with a soft cloth or compressed air, but the smell persisted.

"The machine is great, but it smells as if it was assembled near a tomcat's litter box," wrote a customer using the handle "three west" on a Dell forum back in June. "It is truly awful!"

On Wednesday, another customer writing under the handle "passflips" said he felt terrible for repeatedly scolding his cat Jerry, because he thought the elderly cat kept spraying the computer. The poster also said he wasted money on veterinarian bills in an attempt to determine whether his cat had a medical problem.

Dell said Thursday that its investigation revealed strange scent is related to a manufacturing process, which the company has since fixed. But if your portable PC isn't "purrfect," Dell recommends contacting the company's technical support team to have your laptop's palm rest assembly replaced.

Company spokesman David Frink said the odor isn't related to a "biological contamination" and doesn't present a health hazard. He added that newly assembled laptops that are currently in stores aren't affected.

The laptops in question are ultrabooks designed for business use. The base model starts at \$900 on Dell's website, but Dell charges close to \$1,300 for higher-end versions that include Windows 8 and Intel Core i5 processors.

While laptop users may find the smell of cat urine offensive, "cat's pee" is a term sometimes used by wine lovers to describe a wine's aroma.

And while the smell coming from the Dell computers is apparently unintentional, more than one group of engineers is working on "Smell-o-Vision" TV to engage viewers' olfactory senses. In addition, a host of recent smartphone add-ons make scents, too, including the Scentee, a Japanese smartphone attachment that plugs into a phone's earphone jack and dispenses scented vapors through dedicated cartridges.

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