

## Re: Desired behaviour of "ifconfig -alias"

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- *From:* Oliver Fromme <[olli@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:olli@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Mon, 12 Feb 2007 19:09:53 +0100 (CET)
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JoaoBR <[joao@xxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:joao@xxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

Oliver Fromme wrote:

JoaoBR <[joao@xxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:joao@xxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

....

"ifconfig nic -alias" is obviously a wired and confusing behaviour

It might be confusing to you. Personally I think that the current behaviour isn't that far off.

the question is not you or me,

Right.

But you called it "confusing". That's just your personal perception. It doesn't mean it is confusing to everybody. In fact it might be useful to others. It is useful to me, for example, and I would object for that syntax to go away. Also note that it doesn't hurt anybody. If you don't like that that syntax doesn't throw an error, then don't use that syntax.

However, I agree that the manual page should be updated a bit to match reality. If nobody else does it, I can take a shot at it and submit a docs PR.

First you need to be aware that there is no distinction between a primary IP and alias IPs (such a distinction existed historically, but it's gone). All of the IPs on an interface are equal, just like hardlinks on a file.

## Re: Desired behaviour of "ifconfig -alias"

I said this in shorter words in my post but it is not the point at all.

It's not "the" point, but it's an important detail.

The "-alias" parameter simply removes an address from an

man page tells us that it removes THE specified address ... not AN address

I didn't say what the manpage says, I said what the "-alias" parameter does.

If the manpage says something different, I suggest that the manpage should be fixed.

interface. The term "alias" should really be avoided because it is misleading. You can use "delete" or "remove" which do the same thing. I think "-alias" should really be regarded to exist for backwards compatibility only. Personally I always use "delete".

it is not misleading and it is a perfect term. With alias you add secondary addresses to an interface. Like secondary is probably the better word,

No, not at all. As soon as you use the terms "primary IP address" and "secondary IP addresses", you imply that they are not equal. But they are equal. It's just a list of IP addresses assigned to an interface which happens to have a certain order.

I know that I can add the first IP also with alias but that is not the usual way.

The usual way is to use "add" and "delete". Well, at least for me.

(I'm not advocating to remove the historical "alias" and "-alias" parameters, if that's what you're afraid of. Use them if you like them. That's not the point.)

Re: Desired behaviour of "ifconfig -alias"

Also do not forget that the usual way since ever is `ifconfig_nic_alias0` to add one. So this thing is confusing.

Yes, that's why I wrote it should be changed to not contain the word "alias" anymore, but simply an enumerated list.

If no IP address is specified, then it's not completely nonsensical to remove the first address. In fact I've used that short-cut to quickly remove the only address from an interface. I've used "`ifconfig xyz0 delete`" quite a lot.

the man page tells us that `-alias` removes *the* specified address and not the first, also the man page does not say that there is any further action when *no* IP address specified

That's true. Usually if something is not documented, the behaviour is undefined.

`delete` is according to the man page another word for `-alias`, that means, using grammatical logic that `-alias` is the main command,

No. It means that "`delete`" and "`remove`" are aliases for "`-alias`". In reality they're simply equal. :-)

then according to the man page there is no other command as "`-alias *IP*`" to remove an IP address and `-alias` only should not remove anything

It's not documented that way. As I wrote above.

If something is not documented, that doesn't mean that it shouldn't do anything at all. In that case a `_lot_` of things wouldn't work. :-)

then already being here there is more, `ifconfig nic alias` does not return anything at all

That's the same as "`ifconfig nic add`". If you don't tell it anything to add, then it won't add anything, of course.

Re: Desired behaviour of "ifconfig -alias"

Remember that UNIX always tries to do exactly what you tell it to do. :-)

you see, now you apply logic because you want to and when not not ... ;)

to let it more clear what I mean, you say: "you don't tell it anything to add" so why the heck "ifconfig nic -alias" should remove one if I do not tell so?

In the case of adding something, what should be added if nothing is specified? Should the tool invent an arbitrary IP address and add it? Now that would be nonsensical.

But when removing something without specifying which one, it makes some sense to simply remove the first existing address on that interface. It would even be OK with me to remove the last one, or an arbitrary one -- I use that shortcut mostly when I need to remove the only address from an interface (or all existing addresses), so it doesn't matter.

In fact, it might also make sense to enhance the syntax to allow the specification of a number, for example "ifconfig xyz0 delete #2" would remove the second address from that interface. (That's just an example, the syntax may look different.)

However, such a feature will run into problems when the set of ip addresses is not an ordered list anymore, which might very well happen in the future. Then there will be no "first" and "last" anymore, but instead the interface will just have an unordered set of IP addresses. In fact I wish that would already be the case, so people saying "primary" and "secondary" would shut up already. :-)

Best regards  
Oliver

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Oliver Fromme, secnetix GmbH & Co. KG, Marktplatz 29, 85567 Grafing b. M.  
Handelsregister: Registergericht Muenchen, HRA 74606, USt-Id: DE204219783  
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"A language that doesn't have everything is actually easier to program in than some that do."

-- Dennis M. Ritchie

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