

Travel Industry Background on the Avian Flu May, 2006

- Everyone involved in communicating about the avian flu virus should be responsible and not overreact. When we have a crisis we need to act accordingly, but let's make sure we don't inadvertently create a travel crisis if there's no proven health crisis.
- The World Tourism Organization points out that the negative impact on world travel during the SARS scare of 2003 was the result of an “**infodemic**”—too much news, often unsubstantiated and speculative—rather than an **epidemic**.
- It is wise to take sensible precautions against the spread of disease before it poses a real threat. We hope that efforts to prepare for a possible future pandemic comfort travelers. We should be prepared, not panicked.
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control currently has no travel restrictions whatsoever related to avian flu, not even for the nine countries in Asia and Africa where birds have infected humans. The World Health Organization does not recommend any restrictions on travel to areas affected by H5N1. Both organizations warn travelers to affected areas to avoid open markets where poultry is sold.
- The H5N1 avian flu is not new. The first human infected by a bird was in 1997. Fewer than 200 people have been infected mainly through direct physical contact with birds and eating undercooked poultry.
- Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Malaysia all experienced outbreaks of various avian flus but have brought them under control and are now considered disease-free by the WHO.

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Get detailed information about avian flu from the official U.S. government Web site, [pandemicflu.gov](#).

Sources: [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
[World Tourism Organization](#)
[TIA Avian Flu Webinar](#) (Look for “Recorded Sessions” at left on web page.)