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**Irradiated and Pasteurized Food Use in Long Term Care Facilities,
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Foodborne illness in vulnerable populations, such as elderly in long-term care facilities (LTCF), is a significant public health concern. Irradiated meats and pasteurized eggs and egg products are safer forms of these foods, but their use in LTCF has yet to be examined.

The objectives of this study were to determine food use practices and to document knowledge of food irradiation and pasteurization held by food service professionals in New York State (NYS) LTCF.

In 2005, a self-administered mailed survey was sent to food service directors of 239 LTCF in selected NYS counties as part of a Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet) study.

Respondents were asked to provide the number of mealtime servings of irradiated and pasteurized foods in the week prior to survey completion. Knowledge of food irradiation and pasteurization was assessed by measuring agreement/disagreement with statements about these processes.

One hundred seventy surveys (71%) were returned. Facilities reported low use of irradiated ground beef (1.2%) and poultry (4.1%), some use of pasteurized shell eggs (15.7%) and widespread use of pasteurized liquid egg products (95.8%). While 21% of respondents did not know that irradiation kills harmful bacteria, only 6% did not know that pasteurization kills bacteria in eggs and egg products.

Widespread use of pasteurized liquid egg products indicates that knowledge about pasteurization and egg safety is widely disseminated to NYS LTCF food service directors. Increased education about irradiated meats and wider availability may lead to greater use and reduced risk of foodborne illness in this vulnerable population.