



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **FESS PARKER DOUBLETREE IN HOT WATER FOR POISONING BIRDS**

*Santa Barbara, CA* – The Fess Parker Doubletree in Santa Barbara was investigated and found in violation of regulations related to its poisoning of up to roughly 21 protected and desired bird species at its Cabrillo Boulevard location. After complaints were filed by the Environmental Defense Center (EDC), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner investigated this matter and have concluded that the Doubletree applied a bird poison known as Avitrol in bird feeders and illegally used this poison with the intention to control pigeons and sparrows near the hotel's rotunda.

EDC received several reports from Santa Barbara residents between February and April 2014 and contacted CDFW wardens which were dispatched to the site. It was quickly determined that the Doubletree placed bird food in feeders for several weeks then hired Hydrex to periodically place the poisoned bait in the bird feeders. No experts were employed by the hotel to monitor the poison to ensure that it only affected target nuisance species birds. This violated the Avitrol Mixed Grains label which specifically states "Avitrol must not be exposed in any manner that may endanger desirable and protected bird species." Additionally, the Avitrol label states "a certified applicator must ensure children, pests, and non-target species do not come in contact with the blend during the entire application period." Hydrex left bait at the site unsupervised, thus violating Avitrol label use restrictions.

Birds were poisoned in six areas surrounding the outdoor dining area. It is not known for certain how many birds have been killed or for how long the hotel has poisoned birds. However, what we do know for certain is that the birdseed samples collected tested positive for Avitrol.

Sally Webb who initially reported the bird poisonings to EDC said, "My husband and I walk by the hotel every day with our dog. We were shocked to see Hydrex employees placing poison bait for the birds. We were asked to be careful to make sure our dog did not get into the poison. Our most effective action was to call EDC."

EDC's Brian Trautwein reported the poisonings to CDFW. "The hotel is one of Santa Barbara's best-known resorts so we were surprised when we received calls saying the Doubletree is poisoning birds," said Trautwein, an Environmental Analyst / Watershed Program Coordinator with EDC. "Birds are important to people's quality of life. They are an important part of our food web, helping to control nuisance insects like mosquitos and flies. No one should be killing birds or putting out pesticides - especially without following the label instructions. We hope and

expect that the Doubletree will stop its inappropriate and troubling practice of killing songbirds and using harmful poisons.”

Under the food and Agricultural Code § 11879, the County Agricultural Commissioner’s office has ordered the Doubletree to immediately cease and desist the application of Avitrol in violation of unsupervised handling and exposure to endangered bird species. Practices such as this must not go unheard not only for the protection of non-target species, but also for pets, children and loved ones.

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*The **Environmental Defense Center**, a non-profit law firm, protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action and works primarily within Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties. Since 1977, EDC has empowered community based organizations to advance environmental protection. Program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health. Learn more about EDC at [www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org](http://www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org)*