

Notes from....



## Serrano Creek Ranch Equestrian Center

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These economic challenging times have been very hard on retail businesses. Our local tack store run by Erica has taken a broadside hit as we all cut back to deal with our own personal challenges. She has struggled to keep the doors open with the hope that good times would return. At some point the old way of doing business just doesn't work and the reality of the situation must be dealt with. Effective in November, Erica will significantly reduce the area of her store, emphasizing consignment and supplements. By November 16<sup>th</sup>, the stable itself will take over feed, stall products, and a few of the standards.

It seems that one of the biggest obstacles to all the operators of the tack store has been the amount of labor that is required for the 44 hours per week the store has been historically open. As sales fall, the cost of this labor tips the scales to a loss. Instead the stable will be trying a new model to provide your daily retail services, significantly reducing the labor component in order to keep the doors open during these hard times.

Over the last few years, internet and off-site stores have been providing a larger percentage of sales to our boarders. With both these type of providers, you sacrifice the convenience of going into a "bricks and mortar" store, but that is offset with the convenience of shopping 24 / 7, and having your order shipped directly to you. The stable's new retail operation will be based on a website model that will allow you to shop 24 / 7 and send an order in. Eventually the store will have an e-commerce type of web page that will allow filling a cart and sending the order in. In the interim, the SCR web site will have a page listing the items and price lists. You will be able to send a fax / leave a voice mail (949-768-5055) or email to [store@serranocreekranch.com](mailto:store@serranocreekranch.com).

Initially, once per day (tentatively- Monday

through Saturday) your order will be delivered to your tack shed or stall. By the end of November, large storage lockers will be built in the front of the store (actually now the warehouse), where your purchase will be staged for pick-up. A lock with your unique four digit combination will be placed on the locker door. Whenever you get here, remove our feed and place the lock back on the door. The next day the lock will be removed and stored until the next time you order. Every time the same lock will be used so the number combination will be the same.

Now here are a few rubs. To keep costs down, we'll not be accepting credit cards. The 2-3% that credit cards take to complete the transaction represents a significant portion of the minimal profit feed sales have. Payment options are: cash, check, or charged to your stable account. Secondly the store is a warehouse. While SCR staff is out and about, please don't ask us to run back to the store to open up for that bottle of fly spray. If we're in the office, then you can pick up, but always assume that the office is closed, and you're lucky if it is open. The primary and principle job of the office is to run the boarding operation, and tack / feed sales being secondary. We understand that shavings and compost orders are more time sensitive, and if you can catch one of our employees, they'll bring either of them. Still it would be best to plan ahead and use the ordering system.

Initially the inventory carried will be conservative as we get a feel how this new model works. Hilario and his daughter Lupe, will be the order takers and fulfillers. They are a great team, and we're sure that they'll do an excellent great job. We look forward to this new adventure that is a mixture of new and old technologies and faces.

Thanks to all for your patience on the road project. To date we've installed 8,000 square feet, with about 3,000 more to go. We'll try to do one more push to the starting point of the tack sheds, before we begin the winterization. While it would be nice (and may happen) to finish before the rains, the last section has received quite a bit of gravel over the years, and should last through another rain season.

The project is turning out better than expected. With the rains coming we can say good-bye to the mud and huge ruts that followed each storm. Our goal of maintaining the stable in any weather condition continues to move forward!



Thanks to Gail Golley for leaving this important information on our anonymous tipster line (oops!)

A note for those that have large trailers. You may want to spend some time looking at the DMV web site to make sure that your driver's license has the proper classification. Here is a section from that page:

*A Noncommercial Class A license is required if you tow: a livestock trailer that is not for hire, weight over 10,000 lbs. GVWR but not over 15,000 lbs. GVWR, and is operated within 150 miles of the farm by a farmer to transport livestock*

[http://www.dmv.ca.gov/dl/dl\\_info.htm](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/dl/dl_info.htm)

We'll begin our winterization on November 16th, starting with the west side of the stable (the stalls by the park). I expect that we'll move quickly as the many past years' efforts have built up a nice base for each stall. Also, many stalls have been filling their holes with the reclaimed rock through the year.

This year we'll be bringing in only decomposed granite and birds' eye gravel. The sales of the larger pea gravel have dropped off considerably. We'll also have the reclaimed rock available as long as the supply lasts. This rock will be cleaned a second time and is a much cheaper alternative that does the same as new rock. Also by having less variety of material our costs are reduced. Last year the various materials were \$64 per scoop. This year that cost is reduced to \$54, a 15% reduction! The reclaimed rock will be \$20 per half scoop. Even though this rock is cheaper, I would recommend that you look at this rock to make sure that the wood chips that remain are not a problem.



Attached is the form for you to fill out and send to the office. We'll also have this form (downloadable) available on the website. As usual, any questions you may have, please feel free to ask.

As a rule of thumb, if you are going to bed a stall with shavings, or a similar product, then do it very deeply (6"+). I would not recommend using compost to bed with during the rainy season, as it's finer size particles hold much water.

