



# SERRANO CREEK RANCH EQUESTRIAN CENTER



25200 Trabuco Rd, Lake Forest, Ca 92630  
 serranocreekranch@msn.com  
 (949) 768-5921

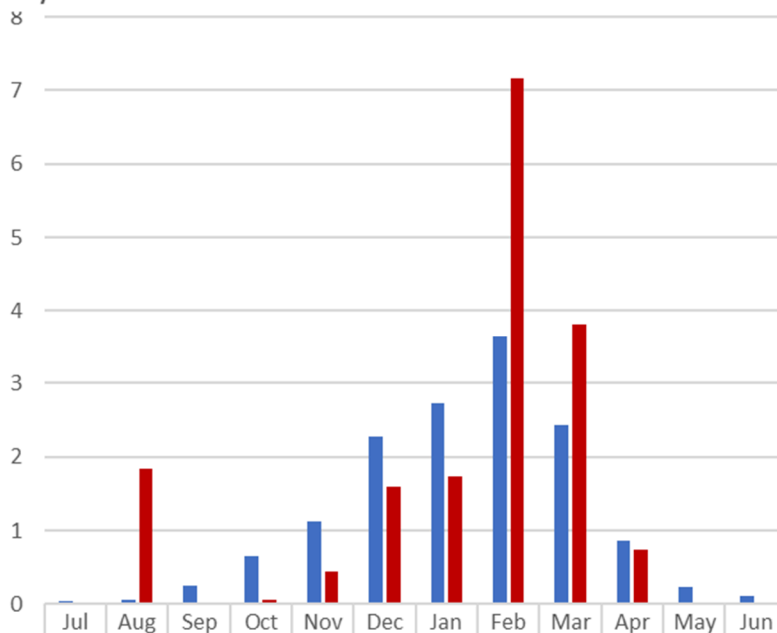
## Winter Rain Review

While not technically over, the winter of 2023-2024 has been unique:

Remember the August hurricane Hilary that brought 1.83" to our area? For the weather geeks, this was the first tropical storm warning ever issued for southern California. While the dire predictions for our area proved overstated, the storm's center moved further inland, with parts of San Bernardino County receiving 13.5 inches!

Given that California seems to be in perpetual drought, such a big storm created a lot of optimism that this would be a robust El Nino year. But weather always finds a way to frustrate forecasters, and September through January was pretty dry, and talk again turned back to another year of drought. By the end of January, we had received only 80% of the average amount of rain. If one deducts the atypical rainfall from Hilary, we were really at 55% of normal

2023-2024 Monthly Totals vs. Historical



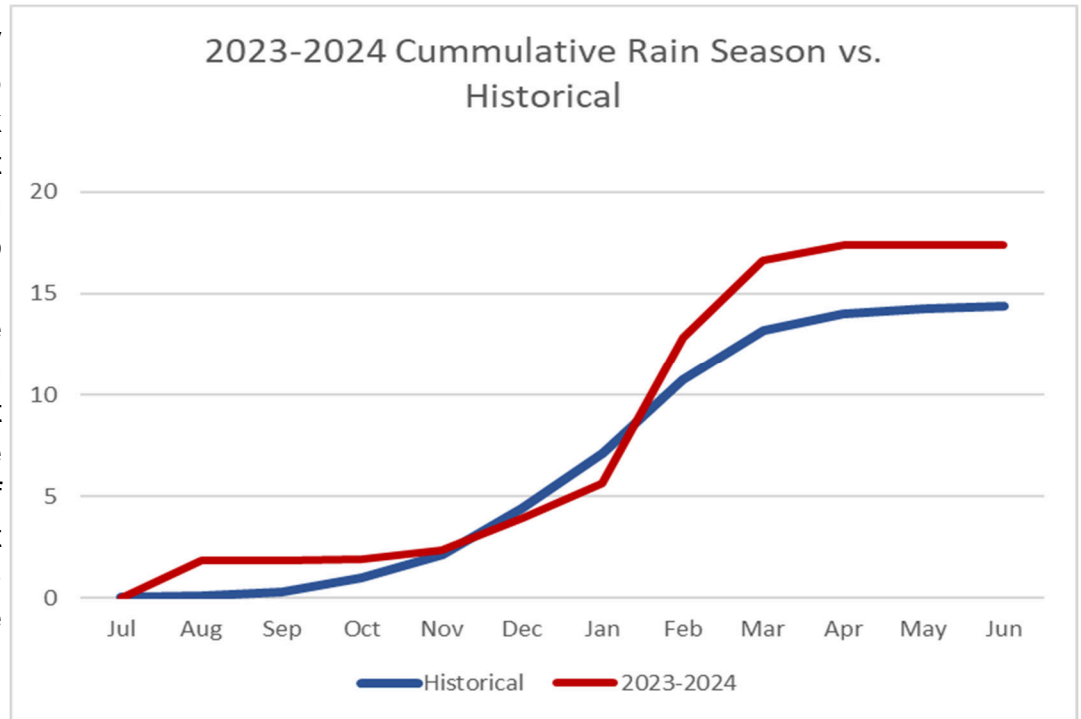
■ Monthly Historical Average	0.03	0.05	0.25	0.65	1.13	2.27	2.73	3.63	2.44	0.86	0.23	0.11
■ 2023-2024 Monthly Totals	0	1.83	0.02	0.05	0.44	1.6	1.73	7.16	3.82	0.74	0	0

## MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER

### IN THIS EDITION:

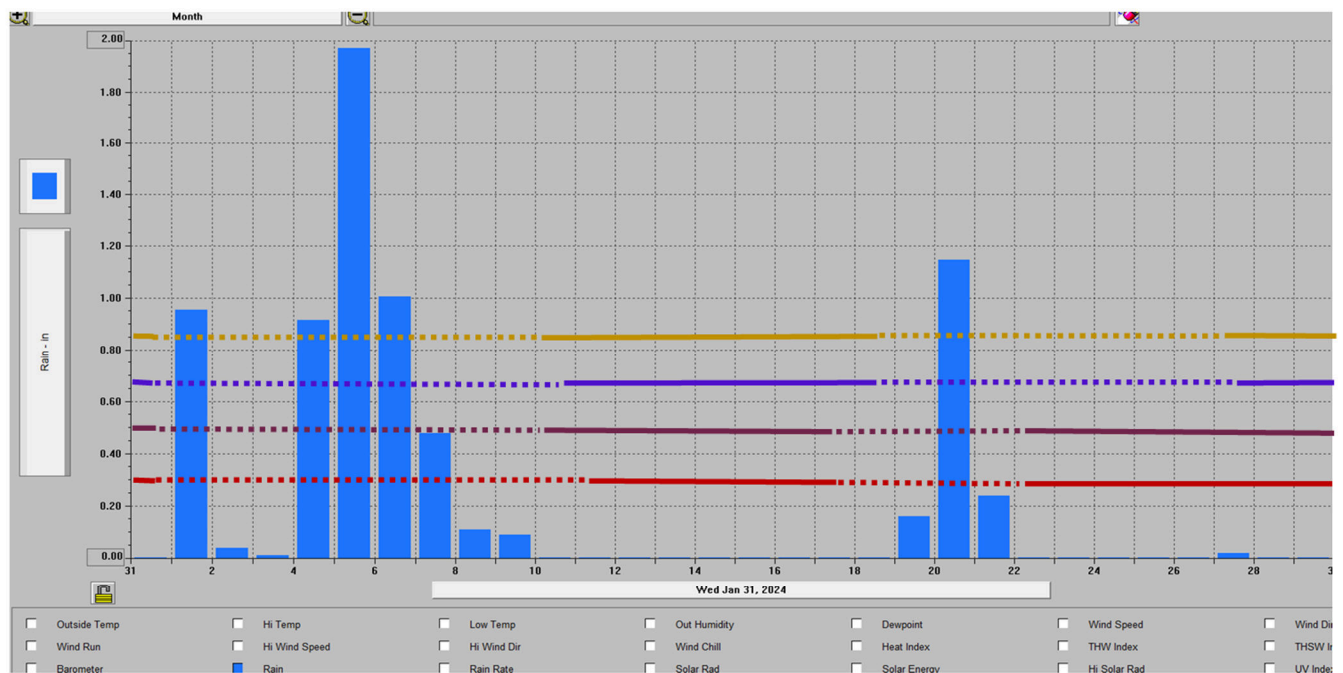
- **Winter Rain Review**
- **Stable Waiting List Policy**
- **E-Bikes In Serrano Park**
- **California Laws & Stabling Costs**
- **Norco Horse Show Results**

Then came February with 7.16" of rain (197% of normal), which took our total from a drought to a wet year by taking annual rainfall to date to 120% of normal. March continued with more above-normal rain (157%), so we were at 127% of the year-to-date total by the end of March. Even if we don't receive more rain, we will still be 121% of the average for the year.



For many riders, February was frustrating because of the number of arena closures that were in place throughout the month. I took some time to review our arena closures and plotted the four main arenas on the same graph as the SCR weather station. The graph below begins on January 31st and ends on February 28th. The rain days are shown in blue columns, and the various arenas are shown as either closed (dotted line) or open (solid line). Given that we had 12 rainy days, we did pretty well.

February SCR Arena Closures vs. Rain Days



**Legend:**

Open ———  
 Closed ······

Back Arena ———  
 Bee Arena ———

Front Arena ———  
 Training Arena ———

## **Waiting List Policies**

The demand for boarding at SCR has dramatically increased due to many stables closing or reducing their boarding capacity. Since last year, we have received increased requests, and our waiting list has risen to over 60.

In the past, when our list was relatively short, we would keep those few folks on the top. Now, we find that the “just keep me on top of the list” prospective boarders have grown quite long. As a result, every time a stall became available, we had first to call the same “just keep me on top” boarders and give each of them time to respond. Consequently, stalls would remain vacant for a long time until we finished the calling campaign. It was quite common that we had to turn away horse owners who were ready to move in today because we hadn’t finished calling the “keep me on the top of the list” folks.

Now, when the office staff calls, potential boarders are provided with one of four options:

- Take the stall and move in within 15 days.
- Reserve their place by dry stalling to ensure a stall is available when they are ready.
- Pass on their turn and move to the bottom of the list.
- Pass all together and be removed from the list.

This rather draconian policy aims to minimize the waiting list to those genuinely interested in boarding and speed up availability for them.

## **E-Bikes In Serrano Park**

A guide for horse riders who encounter reckless e-bike riders in the park

E-bikes are becoming more popular as a way to enjoy the outdoors and get some exercise. However, some e-bike riders are not following the rules and regulations of Serrano Park and are endangering the safety of other visitors. If you witness any of the following behaviors from e-bike riders in the park, you should report them to the sheriff’s non-emergency number 949-770-6011 as soon as possible:

Riding on trails that are designated for pedestrians or horses only.

- Riding in a reckless or aggressive manner, such as weaving, cutting off, or intimidating other park users.
- Riding under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Riding without a helmet or other safety equipment.

When you call the sheriff’s non-emergency number, please provide the following information:

- Your name and phone number.
- The location and time of the incident.
- A description of the e-bike and the rider, such as the color, model, license plate, clothing, etc.
- Any other details that might help identify the offender, such as witnesses, photos, videos, etc.

By reporting dangerous e-bike riders, you are helping to keep the park safe and enjoyable for everyone. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

## **Horse Stable Operation- The California Report**

I don't want to whine, but the following is an eye into running a horse stable in California. Unfortunately, the many "free lunches" provided by the state legislature are paid for by hard-working folks like our borders.

### **Workers' Compensation:**

For those unfamiliar with workers' compensation, the stable must purchase no-fault insurance that protects our employees when they are at work. This insurance combines health insurance for accidents and a disability policy for permanent injuries. While required throughout the country, individual states set their own rules.

In California, there is a policy called cumulative trauma. The current employer's workers' comp policy must cover any "disability" regardless of when the employee may have suffered an injury. Unique to California, if the current work contributes to just 1% of the injury, the current employer is on the hook for a lifetime. For example, if someone falls off a ladder at age 20 but develops back pain 30 years later, the current employer must pay a disability claim. While a bonanza for the litigants, it is not so good for those who pay the bills stemming from the legislature's munificence.

As you can imagine, this is fertile ground for attorneys, as the number and dollar amount of cumulative trauma injury claims has skyrocketed in the last decade. Unfortunately, SCR was forced to settle a sizeable cumulative trauma case of a recently departed employee. Like most insurance policies, workers' compensation premiums are based on the number and size of claims.

Until recently, SCR employees have practiced very safe work habits for decades.

We would routinely receive discounts on workers' comp insurance rates of over 30%. With this newly settled claim, our workers' comp policy has doubled from the past rates. And this settlement will affect our rates for years to come. The California legislature seems to forget that, in the end, someone has to pay for these benevolences on which they happily congratulate themselves. As a result, our new workers' compensation rates have increased by \$13 per horse per month, and we are forced to pass this cost on.

### **Fast Food Minimum Wage:**

In ancient Egypt, the pharaoh was the supreme ruler of the people, considered a god on earth, the intermediary between the gods and the commoners. By dint of his holiness, any law enacted by the pharaoh was expected to eclipse any earthly law, such as weather, physics, or economics. Readers of the Old Testament might be familiar with the falseness of absolute pharaoh power.

It is sad to know that the lessons from the Old Testament have still not been learned. I point to the 25% minimum wage hike for fast food workers to \$20/hour. Wouldn't it be wonderful if passing a law could magically uplift by fiat a portion of our society that toils so hard for low wages? Again, the pharaohs/California legislature fail to believe they are mortal. As a result, fast food prices have already substantially increased to adjust for the increased labor costs.

While it may appear that entry-level fast-food workers have received a boost, as those costs work their way through the economy, non-fast-food employees will now demand a wage increase to make up for the more expensive Big Mac combo. One must

remember that increases in entry-level positions require similar increases throughout the organization. Any net gains of the \$20/hr. employee will be lost as general cost increases will be passed throughout California. Unfortunately, the fast-food minimum wage will increase due to the CPI, thus perpetuating inflation in California.

Because the California minimum wage is now a de facto \$20/ hr., other employers now must raise their wages to prevent the loss of their workers to the local french fry cooker. SCR has followed suit and raised wages to maintain our workforce. Increases for lower-level employees were met throughout the company. Therefore, to cover these costs, a 5% increase in stall rates is needed to cover SCR's new wage scale.

On a macro view, California is one of the top donor states to the federal government as measured by taxes paid. This means more money flows from California to visa versa. Because the nation pays taxes on the same progressive tax structure, artificially increasing wages and the cost of living means that California will move further up the donor state list. Californians will pay an even higher percentage of taxes to Washington as the years roll on.

### **Manure Disposal:**

Your stable remains the leader in composting horse manure, but has seen a steady decrease in revenue. Beginning in 2022, California law SB 1383 forbids any form of food, yard waste, or manure from being put in landfills and instead requires them to be recycled. As a result, the compost market has become flooded due to more recycled material being produced than consumed. SCR now must compete with

numerous municipal compost giveaways, meaning we earn less revenue to offset the operational composting costs.

Disposal remains a real challenge for other stables, as stormwater rules for compost facilities greatly discourage them from accepting manure. This is regardless of the fact that manure is a superior soil amendment. For example, the OC Fairgrounds now pays \$102 per horse per month for manure disposal. To partially offset the income reduction, we must increase the disposal cost per stall by \$8 per month.

### **Liability Insurance:**

Most people are aware that many insurance companies are abandoning California. Therefore, there is little competition to write policies that cover horse stables. Couple this with a frivolous suit filed against the stable when we were shopping (SCR eventually won!); potential coverage options were further limited. Luckily, we could obtain coverage at an increase of just \$3 per horse per month above our current policy.

### **No Increases for other charges:**

Feed prices have remained flat because of the decent rainfall these last two years. Therefore, for the near future, there will be no increase in the feed portion of your board bill. Other miscellaneous costs for trailer parking and tack sheds will also remain unchanged to lessen the impact of the above price increases. Rate increases will be effective with the July board. Thank you for being so understanding.

The new rates have already been posted to the stable's website:

[https://serranocreekranch.com/boarding\\_rates.html](https://serranocreekranch.com/boarding_rates.html)

# LESLIE THOMSON TRAINING



Congratulations to all the riders and their horses for the performance at the Norco Horse Shows (NHS). Their dedication, hard work, and skill truly shone through in the arena. Here's to many more victories ahead and to the beautiful bond between you and your majestic companion. Keep riding high on success! Big shout out to the following riders and their horses:



Rider	Horse	Classes
Christi	Smoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ranching Riding</li> <li>Ranch Trail</li> </ul>
Emma	Lana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ranching Riding</li> <li>Ranch Rail</li> </ul>
Kristin	Cloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Western Pleasure</li> <li>Horsemanship</li> <li>City Trail along with Halter &amp; Showmanship</li> </ul>

