

Racehorse training machine the KurtSystem catches the eyes of top UK trainers

By [Nick Dole](#), in Lambourn

Posted 1 Oct 2017, 12:22am



PHOTO: The KurtSystem has created a buzz among trainers in Lambourn, west of London. (ABC News: Nick Dole)

It looks like a theme park ride, whizzing around a track.

But the KurtSystem is no roller coaster. There are no surprise turns or sudden changes of speed. And the horses inside the cars seem entirely unfazed by the 'ride'.

The machine is the brainchild of Turkish industrialist and racing enthusiast Mehmet Kurt, who has spent \$50 million developing it over the past 20 years.

He designed the system out of frustration after seeing many promising young horses being pushed too hard, too soon.

"A lot of expensive horses, quickly break, break, break. Never training," he said.

"I think, 'I have to change the system'."



PHOTO: Mehmet Kurt and Daniele Camuffo monitor the horses with a series of cameras. (ABC News Nick Dole)

Mr Kurt has installed the machine at his property in Lambourn, about 110 kilometres west of London, which is home to some of the UK's top trainers.

It consists of five 'cars' each accommodating two horses.

Attached to an overhead monorail, the cars take horses around the track at various speeds, from a walk to a canter.

Weights are gradually added to the horses' saddles, to simulate the load of a jockey.

KurtSystems general manager Daniele Camuffo, once a trainer in Italy, said the machine prepares horses for training by introducing them to the track slowly.

"They come from the paddock. Their body is green, their muscle is not developed. The skeleton is thin and not enough to support the jockey on the back," he said.

"We think a more soft approach ... is the best way to support young horses from their injuries ... especially sore shins, tendon problems, ligaments."

Heart rate and respiration sensors can also be attached to the horses, to monitor their performance.

Machines can't replace human 'feel'



PHOTO: Charlie Morlock says the KurtSystem is a "fantastic piece of technology", but can't replace the human touch. (ABC News Nick Dole)

Several Lambourn trainers have seen a demonstration of the system.

Charlie Morlock from NJ Henderson Racing thought the device had potential.

"Gosh it's an impressive piece of kit and a fantastic piece of technology," he said.

However Mr Morlock said there were limits to how far technology could advance the sport.

"You could make it extremely scientific, in the same way as human athletes and cyclists, they all train on treadmills and turbo-trainers."

"You can measure their output and all sorts. But you still do need a certain amount of human feel."

"In some ways, the science can replace it, but not completely. You're still going to need someone who can say, 'This horse feels tired, he's done enough for today'."

Is it safe?

Mr Kurt says not a single horse has fallen while using the system.

The machine is controlled from a cabin behind the horses, and cameras monitor them from the front and back.



PHOTO: Monitors allow operators to quickly stop the KurtSystem if trouble arises. (ABC News: Nick Dole)

The system is designed to neither push nor pull the horses and can be quickly stopped if a problem arises.

"When I drive, I see everything that they're doing," Mr Camuffo said.

"We take [it] immediately out of the system, we don't continue to run if the horse is not fine."

The RSPCA said it was aware of the KurtSystem and planned to see it demonstrated soon, to ensure animal welfare standards were upheld.

Mr Kurt said his system had the welfare of horses at its core.

"I like horses more than people," he said.