

A CONTAINER, FOR EXAMPLE FOR FOOD PRODUCTS SUCH AS
CONFECTIONERY, IN THE SHAPE OF A JOINTED TOY

The present invention relates to containers, for example for food products such as confectionery, and concerns in particular a container comprising a casing and at least one associated auxiliary body fixed to the casing and able to give the container itself, for instance animal-like or human-like features. A container of this type is described, for example, in United States Patent No. 4,593,817.

The container described in the above patent generally has a fixed configuration in the sense that, while it may be opened for the removal of the products (for example chocolate eggs) contained within, it has the form of a rigid animal or puppet with no capacity for movement.

In a field of use such as that of containers for food products, and in particular containers for confectionery for children, there is a perceived need to give the containers an ever greater play potential, a requirement which is fairly difficult to satisfy with conventional containers.

The aim of the present invention is to provide a container which has been improved from this point of view, particularly as regards the possibility of

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providing, for example, a container taking the form of a puppet or a small animal which may take up various poses chosen by the user.

According to the present invention, this object is achieved by a container having the characteristics specified in Claim 1. Advantageous developments of the invention are the subject of the Claims which follow.

The invention will now be described, purely by way of non-limitative example, with reference to the appended drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a general perspective view of a container according to the invention;

Figure 2 is an exploded median section, taken on the line II-II of Figure 1, showing the component parts of the container of Figure 1;

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate in detail the characteristics of movement of the various component parts of the container; and

Figures 5 to 7 show the container according to the invention in various positions of use.

In the drawings, a container (for example for confectionery), which in the embodiment illustrated here takes the form of a little animal, for example a little hippopotamus, is generally indicated 1.

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In a structural configuration which is generally known (See for example United States Patent No. 4,593,817 mentioned earlier) the container 1 comprises essentially an egg-shaped casing formed by a (generally lower or rear) first shell 2 of spherical shape and by a further, generally front or upper, shell 3 of ogival or dome shape.

Naturally the terms "lower" and "rear", "upper" and "front" used above refer to the general posture of the animal represented by the container and are not to be interpreted in a limitative manner.

The shells 2, 3 are usually made of plastics material, preferably non transparent for the shell 2 and transparent for the shell 3, and are joined with their open ends in frontal mating relationship.

An adhesive strip 4 (See Figure 1), applied to the container during assembly after the inner cavity defined by at least one of the shells 2 and 3 (typically the dome 3) has been filled with products such as food products, for example chocolate eggs 5, holds the shells 2 and 3 together.

The strip 4 may be removed when desired to allow the shells 2, 3 to be separated for access to the products 5 in the container.

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Two shaped auxiliary bodies 6, 7 (front and rear respectively, still with reference to the posture of the animal), also usually made of plastics material, are provided to give the hollow casing formed by the shells 2 and 3 animal-like or, if required, human-like characteristics. In the selected embodiment, the front body 6 reproduces the features of the animal's face and front legs; the rear body 7 reproduces the features of the hindquarters and/or hind legs of the same animal.

Naturally, the embodiment illustrated is chosen purely by way of example.

In greater detail, it may be seen that the front body 6 is formed, in the embodiment illustrated (see particularly the sectional view of Figure 2), by a single shaped piece. This could however include two or more elements, that is (for example) an outer body comprising the face and the front legs of the animal, except for the eyeballs and the tongue, and an inner body including appropriately shaped parts defining the animal's eyeballs and tongue. The inner body could be joined to the body so that the animal's eyeballs and tongue appear through corresponding apertures in the outer body.

However it is constituted, the body 6 usually has a general shell shape which fits together to complement the ogival shape of the shell 3 of the egg-shaped casing.

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This means that, following well known principles, the body 6 may be fitted onto the shell 3 so as to cover it at least in part.

In an important characteristic of the present invention, the coupling of the front body 6 and the shell 3 is not fixed (as in the case of the animal shown in U.S. Patent No. 4,593,817 already mentioned several times) but movable. To this end, the body 6 is provided with an inner appendage 8 with an enlarged head 9 formed by two resilient half-conical parts. The appendage 8 is therefore able to pass like an arrow through an aperture or hole 10 in the apex of the shell 3.

As a result, the body 6 may be fitted to the shell 3 by the insertion of the appendage 8 through the aperture 10 until the head portion 9 projects inside the shell 3. At this point the resilient half-conical parts, which were compressed by the passage through the hole 10, snap apart to attach the body 6 onto the shell 3.

The body 6 may therefore be rotated with respect to the shell 3 about an axis of rotation X9 which substantially coincides with the main longitudinal axis of the appendage 8 (See especially Figures 2 and 3).

An approximately similar arrangement is used to attach the rear body 7.

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In this case, the rear body 7 has a through-hole 12 (Figure 2) through which the tip of a shaped body 13, also provided with an enlarged head 14 formed by two resilient half-conical parts, may be passed. The body 13 may be shaped so as to form, for example, the animal's tail. The rear shell 2 also has a through-slot 15 extending for a certain distance along a meridian line of the shell 2 (which, as described, has a general spherical shape).

Therefore, the body 7 may be moved relative to the shell 2 (which has a spherical shape, that is with circular curvature about two axes) both by:

- rotation about an axis X14 corresponding to the axis of the head 14 of the body 13,
- and by variation of the position of the axis X14 relative to the shell 2, by sliding of the head 14 and the body 7 along the circular path defined by the slot 15. The above accords with the principles illustrated in greater detail in Figure 4 and exploits the ability of the tail 13, which is slidably engaged in the slot 15, to fix the body 7 in contact with the shell 2 of the casing.

Naturally, the arrangement used to mount the body 7 could also be used to mount the body 6 and vice-versa.

Figures 5 to 7 show schematically how, starting from a normal or walking position (Figure 5) the animal



container 1 according to the invention may be moved, for example, into a sitting position (Figure 6) by suitable arrangement of the lower body 7 in such a way that it can support the remaining parts of the container 1 above a surface on which the body 7 is resting (after the stop element 13 has been slid along the slot 15 with the consequent angling of the body 7 relative to the shell 2), or into a half-reclining position (Figure 7) with the hindquarters rotated through about 90° relative to the main part of the body.

Naturally, the positions illustrated are only some of those that the container according to the invention is able to assume.

It should also be appreciated that the entire surface of the shell 2 does not necessarily have to be spherical (although this arrangement appears preferable, above all to ensure simplicity of construction): it is in fact sufficient for the parts intended to mate with the dome defined by the inner surface of the auxiliary body 7 to be spherical.

It should also be noted that the device does not necessarily need to include two auxiliary bodies 6 and 7: the presence of one of these bodies is sufficient to achieve the purpose of the invention.

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Furthermore, it is important to note that the fact that the auxiliary body 7 bears against a spherical surface of the shell 2 does not necessarily mean that the entire inner surface of the body 7 has to be spherical in order to mate with the surface of the shell 2. For this purpose, the complementary spherical capping surfaces (which are in any case a preferred arrangement) could be replaced by non-spherical caps intended to remain spaced from each other except at their peripheral regions: this is largely the arrangement illustrated for the body 6, the central portion of which is spaced from the shell 3.

Furthermore, at least some of the advantages of the invention could be maintained if, instead of achieving coupling between the shell 2 and the auxiliary body 7 at a spherical surface, this coupling were limited dimensionally so as to be achieved along a circular surface (or more correctly along a circular path) of a different nature, for example by coupling at a cylindrical or conical surface.

Regarding use, as stated earlier, the application of the invention to the manufacture of containers reproducing the features of puppets or animals, although preferred, is not binding and the container of the invention may be used for other purposes.

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CLAIMS

1. A container comprising a casing and at least one associated auxiliary body (6,7) mounted on the casing, characterised in that:

- the casing has, at least locally (2), a generally spherical surface,
- the at least one auxiliary body (7) has, at least locally, a circular surface complementary to that of the casing whereby the at least one auxiliary body (7) can be rotated relative to the casing (2) along a circular path, and
- fixing means (12 to 15) are interposed between the casing (2) and the at least one auxiliary body (7) for maintaining the at least one auxiliary body (7) mounted on the casing (2) while keeping the capacity for relative rotation along the circular path.

2. A container according to Claim 1, characterised in that the casing (2) is at least locally spherical and in that the said at least one auxiliary body (7) has, at least locally, a complementary spherical surface so that, in addition to their capacity for relative rotation along a circular path, the hollow casing (2) and the at least one auxiliary body (7) are also relatively rotatable about an axis (X14) extending generally radially of the said complementary spherical surfaces; the position of





this rotation axis (X14) being variable as a result of the relative rotation along the circular path.

3. A container according to Claim 1 or Claim 2, characterised in that at least one (2) of the casing (2) and the at least one auxiliary body (7) has a through-slot (15) defining the said circular path while the other (7) of the hollow casing (2) and the at least one auxiliary body (7) has associated fixing means (13) for cooperating with the slot (15) for sliding movement there along and for fixing the auxiliary body (7) to the hollow casing (2).

4. A container according to Claim 3, characterised in that the said fixing means (13) cooperate with the slot (15) in a general penetrating and fastening relationship to hold the at least one auxiliary body (7) on the casing (2).

5. A container according to Claim 3, characterised in that the slot (15) is provided in the hollow casing and extends generally along a meridian line thereof.

6. A container according to any one of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the fixing means (13) are also formed as an auxiliary element which can give the container a human-like or animal-like character.

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7. A container according to any one of Claims 3 to 5, characterised in that the said at least one auxiliary body (7) has an aperture (12) intended to be aligned with the slot (15) and in that the fixing means (13) are intended to extend in succession through the aperture (12) and the slot (15).

8. A container according to any one of the preceding Claims, characterised in that it includes at least one further auxiliary body (6) coupled to the casing (3) so as to be able to rotate about an axis (X9) extending generally in a direction perpendicular to the wall of the hollow casing.

9. A container according to Claim 8, characterised in that one (3) of the said casing and the said further auxiliary body (6) has an aperture (9, 10) and in that the other (6) of the said hollow casing and the said further auxiliary body has a fastening formation (8) which can penetrate the aperture (10).

10. A container according to any one of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the casing is constituted by two shells (2, 3) connectable to each other by mating open end to open end.

11. A container according to Claim 10, characterised in that at least one (2) of the said shells has a generally

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spherical surface.

12. A container according to Claim 10 or Claim 11, characterised in that the other (3) of the said shells is generally dome-shaped so that the hollow casing is generally egg-shaped.

13. A container according to Claim 8 and to Claim 12, characterised in that the at least one auxiliary body (7) is coupled to the generally spherical shell (2) while the at least one further auxiliary body (6) is coupled to the other, generally dome-shaped shell (3).

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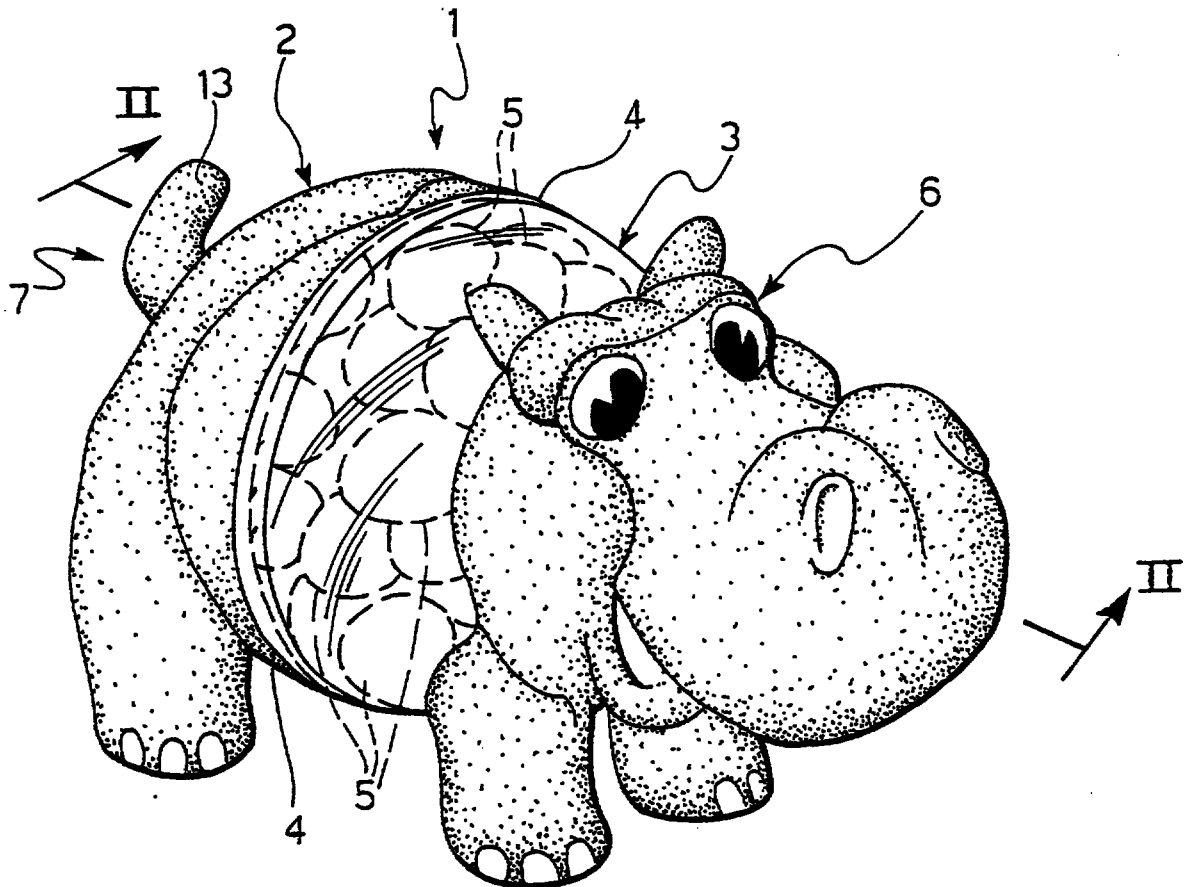
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ABSTRACTA CONTAINER, FOR EXAMPLE FOR FOOD PRODUCTS
SUCH AS CONFECTIONERY, IN THE SHAPE OF A JOINTED TOY

The container includes a hollow casing (2,3) of general ovoid shape. Auxiliary bodies (6,7) intended to give the container as a whole animal-like or human-like characteristics are associated with the shells (2, 3). At least one (7) of these auxiliary bodies is associated with the casing so as to be relatively rotatable along a circular path and rotatable about an axis generally perpendicular to the surface of the casing.

(Figure 2).

FIG. 1

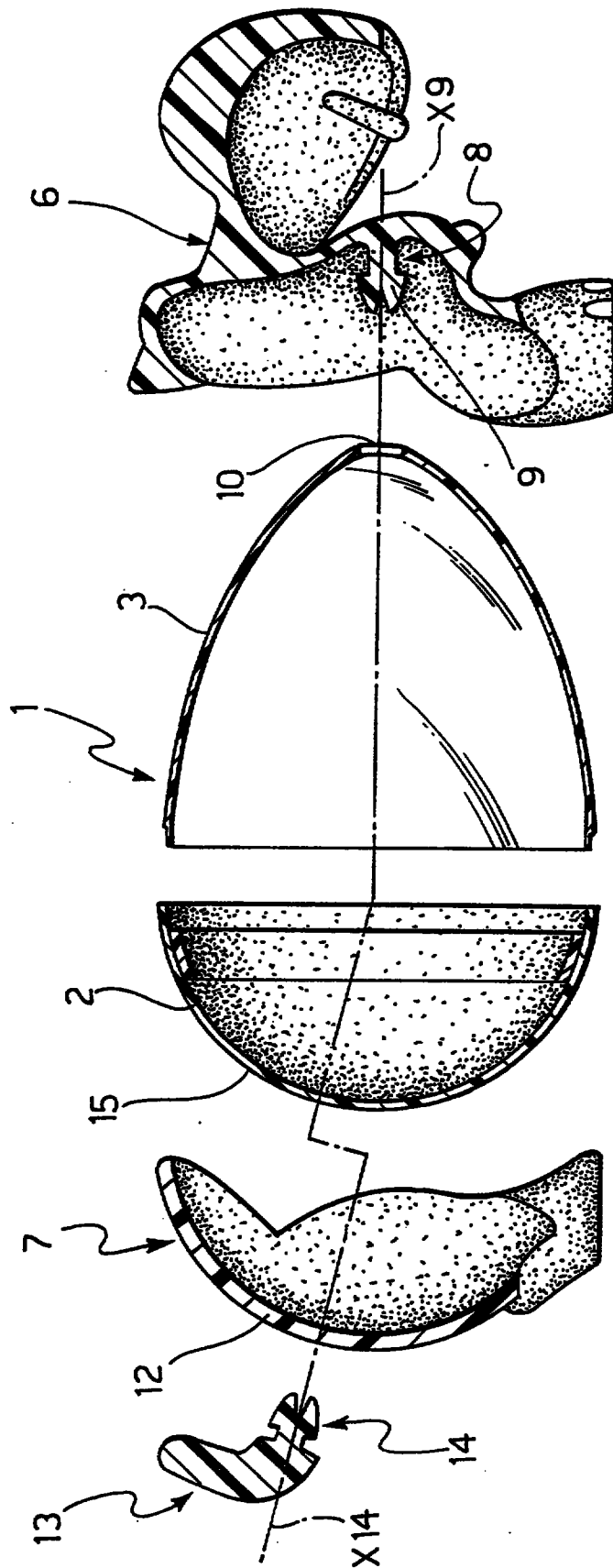


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FIG. 2



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FIG. 3

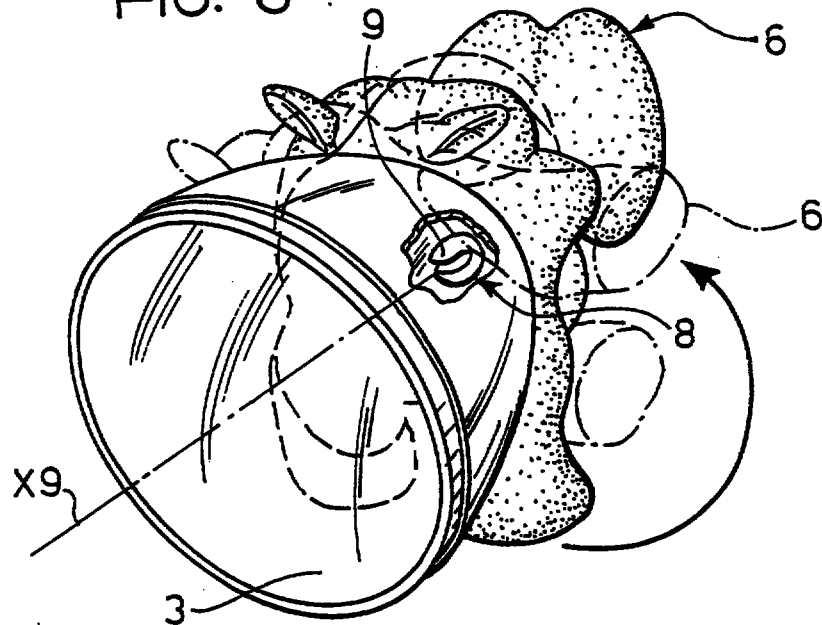
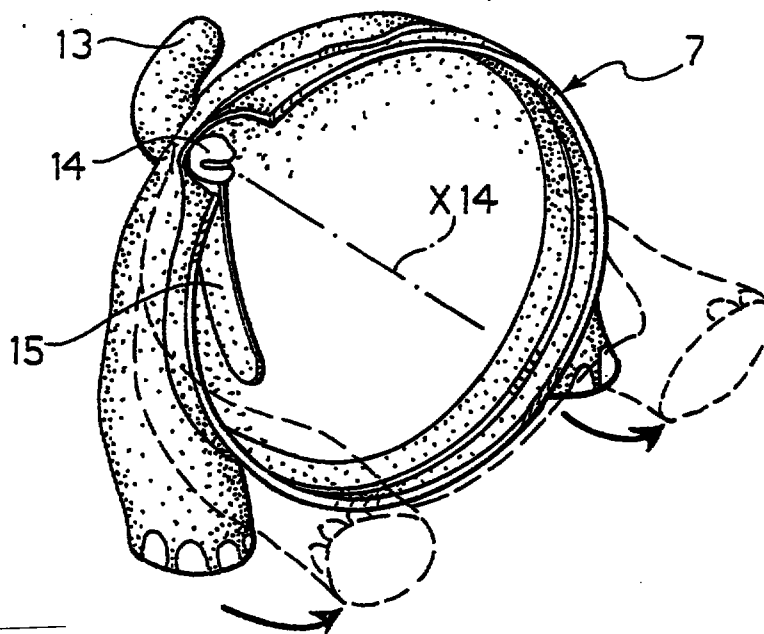


FIG. 4



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FIG. 5

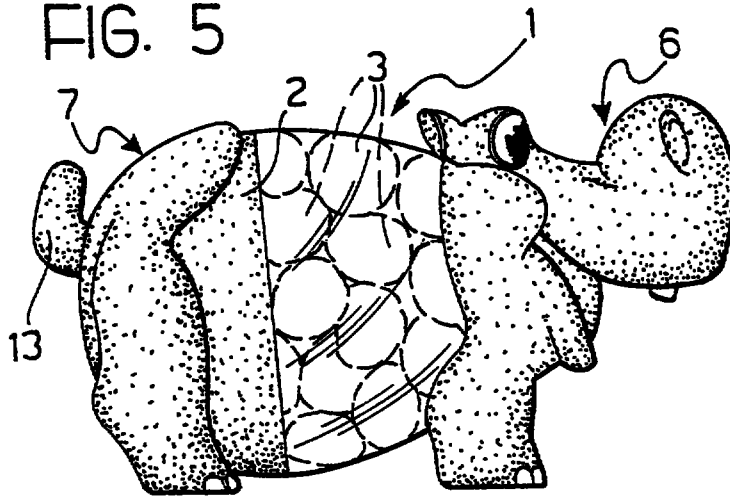


FIG. 6

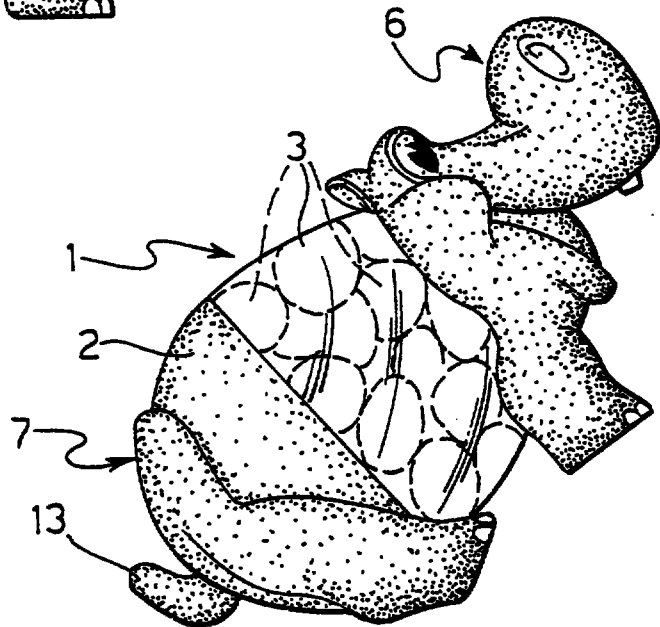
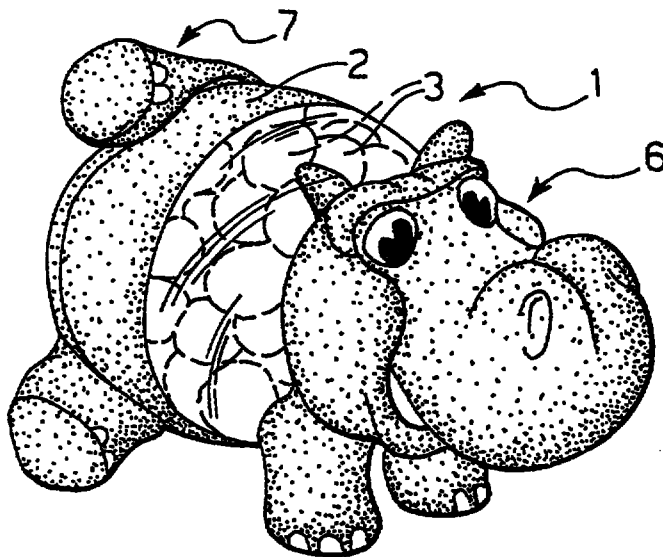


FIG. 7



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A CONTAINER FOR EXAMPLE FOR FOOD PRODUCTS SUCH AS
CONFECTIONERY, IN THE SHAPE OF A JOINTED TOY

The present invention relates to containers, for example for food products such as confectionery, and concerns in particular a container comprising a casing and at least one associated auxiliary body fixed to the casing and able to give the container itself, for instance animal-like or human-like features. A container of this type is described, for example, in United States Patent No. 4,593,817.

The container described in the above patent generally has a fixed configuration in the sense that, while it may be opened for the removal of the products (for example chocolate eggs) contained within, it has the form of a rigid animal or puppet with no capacity for movement.

In a field of use such as that of containers for food products, and in particular containers for confectionery for children, there is a perceived need to give the containers an ever greater play potential, a requirement which is fairly difficult to satisfy with conventional containers.

The aim of the present invention is to provide a container which has been improved from this point of view, particularly as regards the possibility of

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providing, for example, a container taking the form of a puppet or a small animal which may take up various poses chosen by the user.

According to the present invention, this object is achieved by a container having the characteristics specified in Claim 1. Advantageous developments of the invention are the subject of the Claims which follow.

The invention will now be described, purely by way of non-limitative example, with reference to the appended drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a general perspective view of a container according to the invention;

Figure 2 is an exploded median section, taken on the line II-II of Figure 1, showing the component parts of the container of Figure 1;

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate in detail the characteristics of movement of the various component parts of the container; and

Figures 5 to 7 show the container according to the invention in various positions of use.

In the drawings, a container (for example for confectionery), which in the embodiment illustrated here takes the form of a little animal, for example a little hippopotamus, is generally indicated 1.

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In a structural configuration which is generally known (See for example United States Patent No. 4,593,817 mentioned earlier) the container 1 comprises essentially an egg-shaped casing formed by a (generally lower or rear) first shell 2 of spherical shape and by a further, generally front or upper, shell 3 of ogival or dome shape.

Naturally the terms "lower" and "rear", "upper" and "front" used above refer to the general posture of the animal represented by the container and are not to be interpreted in a limitative manner.

The shells 2, 3 are usually made of plastics material, preferably non transparent for the shell 2 and transparent for the shell 3, and are joined with their open ends in frontal mating relationship.

An adhesive strip 4 (See Figure 1), applied to the container during assembly after the inner cavity defined by at least one of the shells 2 and 3 (typically the dome 3) has been filled with products such as food products, for example chocolate eggs 5, holds the shells 2 and 3 together.

The strip 4 may be removed when desired to allow the shells 2, 3 to be separated for access to the products 5 in the container.

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Two shaped auxiliary bodies 6, 7 (front and rear respectively, still with reference to the posture of the animal), also usually made of plastics material, are provided to give the hollow casing formed by the shells 2 and 3 animal-like or, if required, human-like characteristics. In the selected embodiment, the front body 6 reproduces the features of the animal's face and front legs; the rear body 7 reproduces the features of the hindquarters and/or hind legs of the same animal.

Naturally, the embodiment illustrated is chosen purely by way of example.

In greater detail, it may be seen that the front body 6 is formed, in the embodiment illustrated (see particularly the sectional view of Figure 2), by a single shaped piece. This could however include two or more elements, that is (for example) an outer body comprising the face and the front legs of the animal, except for the eyeballs and the tongue, and an inner body including appropriately shaped parts defining the animal's eyeballs and tongue. The inner body could be joined to the body so that the animal's eyeballs and tongue appear through corresponding apertures in the outer body.

However it is constituted, the body 6 usually has a general shell shape which fits together to complement the ogival shape of the shell 3 of the egg-shaped casing.

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This means that, following well known principles, the body 6 may be fitted onto the shell 3 so as to cover it at least in part.

In an important characteristic of the present invention, the coupling of the front body 6 and the shell 3 is not fixed (as in the case of the animal shown in U.S. Patent No. 4,593,817 already mentioned several times) but movable. To this end, the body 6 is provided with an inner appendage 8 with an enlarged head 9 formed by two resilient half-conical parts. The appendage 8 is therefore able to pass like an arrow through an aperture or hole 10 in the apex of the shell 3.

As a result, the body 6 may be fitted to the shell 3 by the insertion of the appendage 8 through the aperture 10 until the head portion 9 projects inside the shell 3. At this point the resilient half-conical parts, which were compressed by the passage through the hole 10, snap apart to attach the body 6 onto the shell 3.

The body 6 may therefore be rotated with respect to the shell 3 about an axis of rotation X9 which substantially coincides with the main longitudinal axis of the appendage 8 (See especially Figures 2 and 3).

An approximately similar arrangement is used to attach the rear body 7.

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In this case, the rear body 7 has a through-hole 12 (Figure 2) through which the tip of a shaped body 13, also provided with an enlarged head 14 formed by two resilient half-conical parts, may be passed. The body 13 may be shaped so as to form, for example, the animal's tail. The rear shell 2 also has a through-slot 15 extending for a certain distance along a meridian line of the shell 2 (which, as described, has a general spherical shape).

Therefore, the body 7 may be moved relative to the shell 2 (which has a spherical shape, that is with circular curvature about two axes) both by:

- rotation about an axis X14 corresponding to the axis of the head 14 of the body 13,

- and by variation of the position of the axis X14 relative to the shell 2, by sliding of the head 14 and the body 7 along the circular path defined by the slot 15. The above accords with the principles illustrated in greater detail in Figure 4 and exploits the ability of the tail 13, which is slidably engaged in the slot 15, to fix the body 7 in contact with the shell 2 of the casing.

Naturally, the arrangement used to mount the body 7 could also be used to mount the body 6 and vice-versa.

Figures 5 to 7 show schematically how, starting from a normal or walking position (Figure 5) the animal

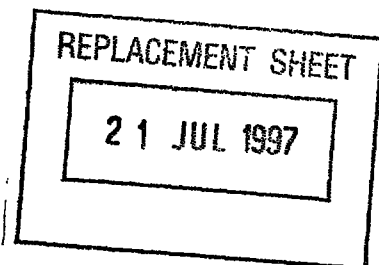
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container 1 according to the invention may be moved, for example, into a sitting position (Figure 6) by suitable arrangement of the lower body 7 in such a way that it can support the remaining parts of the container 1 above a surface on which the body 7 is resting (after the stop element 13 has been slid along the slot 15 with the consequent angling of the body 7 relative to the shell 2), or into a half-reclining position (Figure 7) with the hindquarters rotated through about 90° relative to the main part of the body.

Naturally, the positions illustrated are only some of those that the container according to the invention is able to assume.

It should also be appreciated that the entire surface of the shell 2 does not necessarily have to be spherical (although this arrangement appears preferable, above all to ensure simplicity of construction): it is in fact sufficient for the parts intended to mate with the dome defined by the inner surface of the auxiliary body 7 to be spherical.

It should also be noted that the device does not necessarily need to include two auxiliary bodies 6 and 7: the presence of one of these bodies is sufficient to achieve the purpose of the invention.



Furthermore, it is important to note that the fact that the auxiliary body 7 bears against a spherical surface of the shell 2 does not necessarily mean that the entire inner surface of the body 7 has to be spherical in order to mate with the surface of the shell 2. For this purpose, the complementary spherical capping surfaces (which are in any case a preferred arrangement) could be replaced by non-spherical caps intended to remain spaced from each other except at their peripheral regions: this is largely the arrangement illustrated for the body 6, the central portion of which is spaced from the shell 3.

Furthermore, at least some of the advantages of the invention could be maintained if, instead of achieving coupling between the shell 2 and the auxiliary body 7 at a spherical surface, this coupling were limited dimensionally so as to be achieved along a circular surface (or more correctly along a circular path) of a different nature, for example by coupling at a cylindrical or conical surface.

Regarding use, as stated earlier, the application of the invention to the manufacture of containers reproducing the features of puppets or animals, although preferred, is not binding and the container of the invention may be used for other purposes.



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CLAIMS

1. A container comprising a casing and at least one associated auxiliary body (6,7) mounted on the casing, characterised in that:

- the casing has, at least locally (2), a generally spherical surface,
- the at least one auxiliary body (7) has, at least locally, a circular surface complementary to that of the casing whereby the at least one auxiliary body (7) can be moved relative to the casing (2) along a circular path, and
- fixing means (12 to 15) are provided between the casing (2) and the at least one auxiliary body (7) for maintaining the at least one auxiliary body (7) mounted on the casing (2) while keeping the capacity for relative movement along the circular path.

2. A container according to Claim 1, characterised in that the casing (2) is at least locally spherical and in that the said at least one auxiliary body (7) has, at least locally, a complementary spherical surface so that, in addition to their capacity for relative movement along a circular path, the hollow casing (2) and the at least one auxiliary body (7) are also relatively rotatable about an axis (X14) extending generally radially of the said complementary spherical surfaces; the position of



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this rotation axis (X14) being variable as a result of the relative movement along the circular path.

3. A container according to Claim 1 or Claim 2, characterised in that at least one (2) of the casing (2) and the at least one auxiliary body (7) has a through-slot (15) defining the said circular path while the other (7) of the hollow casing (2) and the at least one auxiliary body (7) has associated fixing means (13) for cooperating with the slot (15) for sliding movement there along and for fixing the auxiliary body (7) to the hollow casing (2).
4. A container according to Claim 3, characterised in that the said fixing means (13) cooperate with the slot (15) in a general penetrating and fastening relationship to hold the at least one auxiliary body (7) on the casing (2).
5. A container according to Claim 3, characterised in that the slot (15) is provided in the hollow casing and extends generally along a meridian line thereof.
6. A container according to any one of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the fixing means (13) are also formed as an auxiliary element which can give the container a human-like or animal-like character.



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7. A container according to any one of Claims 3 to 5, characterised in that the said at least one auxiliary body (7) has an aperture (12) intended to be aligned with the slot (15) and in that the fixing means (13) are intended to extend in succession through the aperture (12) and the slot (15).

8. A container according to any one of the preceding Claims, characterised in that it includes at least one further auxiliary body (6) coupled to the casing (3) so as to be able to rotate about an axis (X9) extending generally in a direction perpendicular to the wall of the hollow casing.

9. A container according to Claim 8, characterised in that one (3) of the said casing and the said further auxiliary body (6) has an aperture (9, 10) and in that the other (6) of the said hollow casing and the said further auxiliary body has a fastening formation (8) which can penetrate the aperture (10).

10. A container according to any one of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the casing is constituted by two shells (2, 3) connectable to each other by mating open end to open end.

11. A container according to Claim 10, characterised in that at least one (2) of the said shells has a generally



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spherical surface.

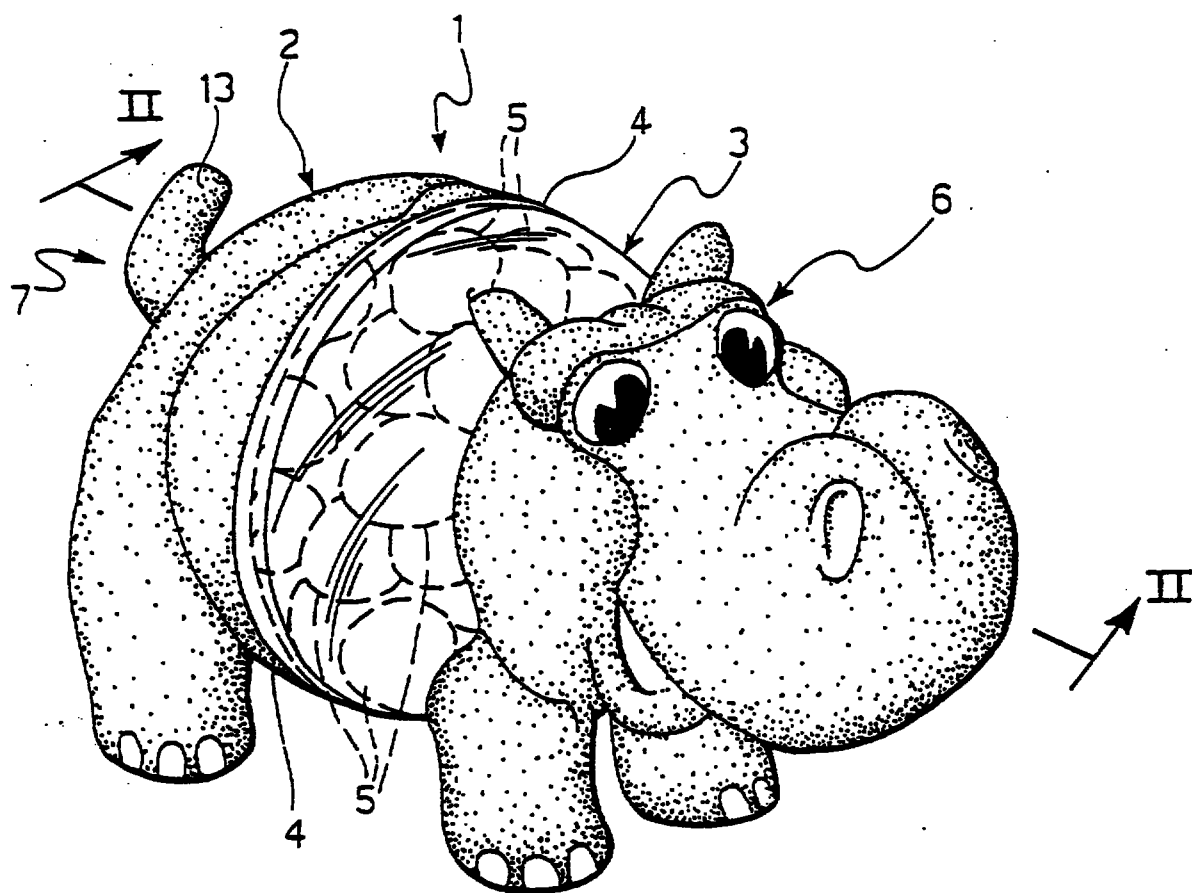
12. A container according to Claim 10 or Claim 11, characterised in that the other (3) of the said shells is generally dome-shaped so that the hollow casing is generally egg-shaped.

13. A container according to Claim 8 and to Claim 12, characterised in that the at least one auxiliary body (7) is coupled to the generally spherical shell (2) while the at least one further auxiliary body (6) is coupled to the other, generally dome-shaped shell (3).

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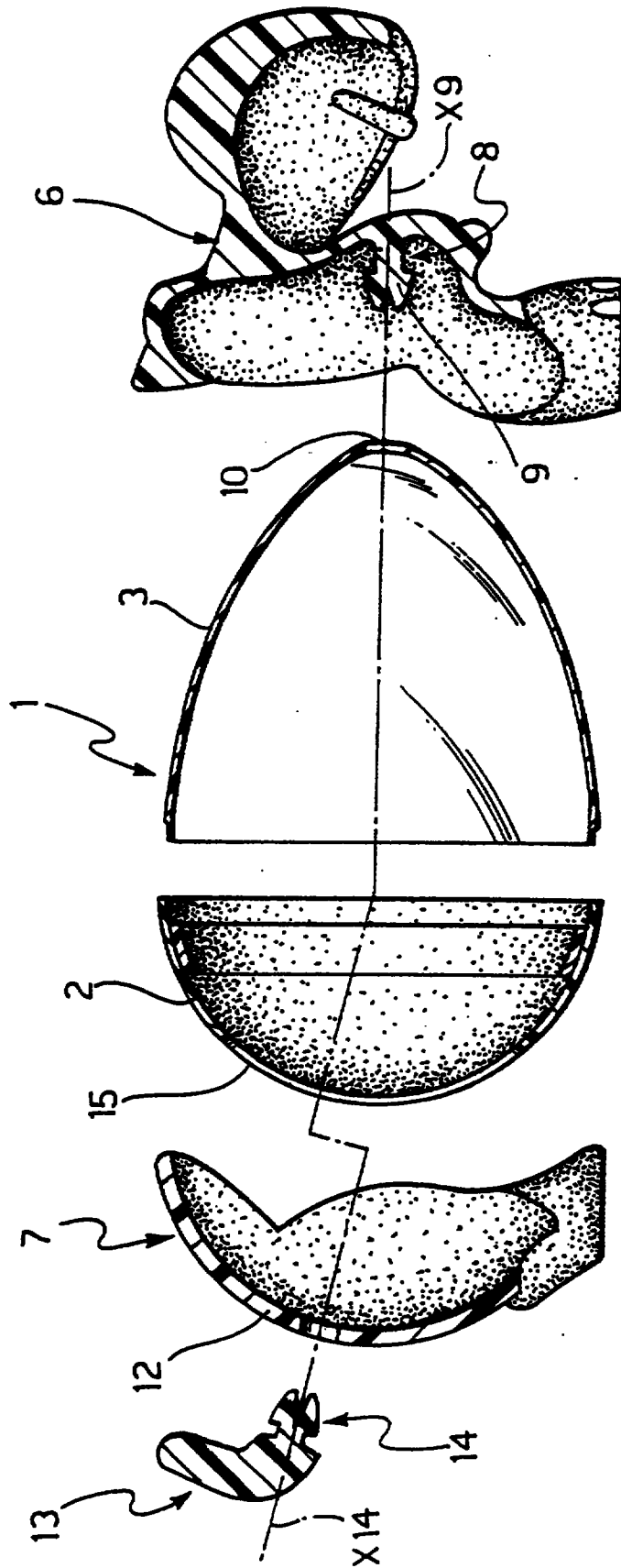
FIG. 1



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FIG. 2



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FIG. 3

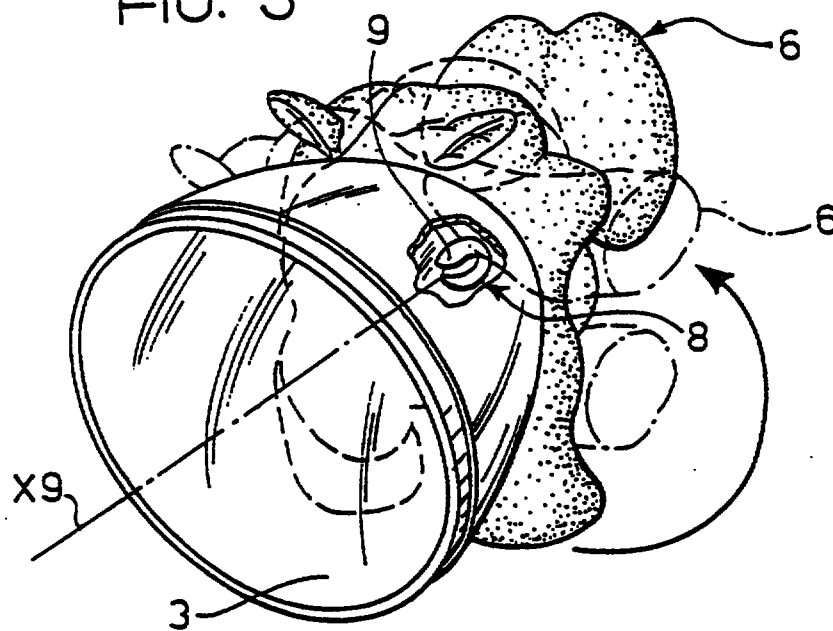


FIG. 4

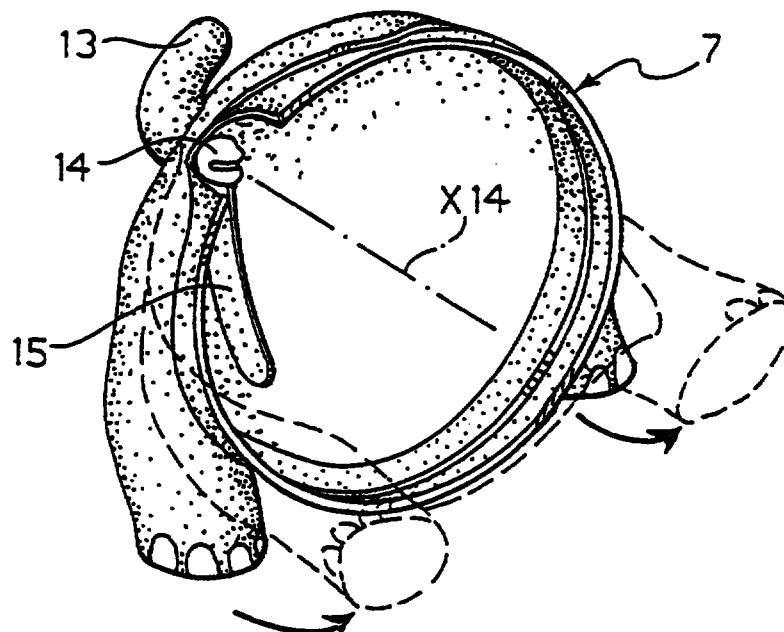


FIG. 5

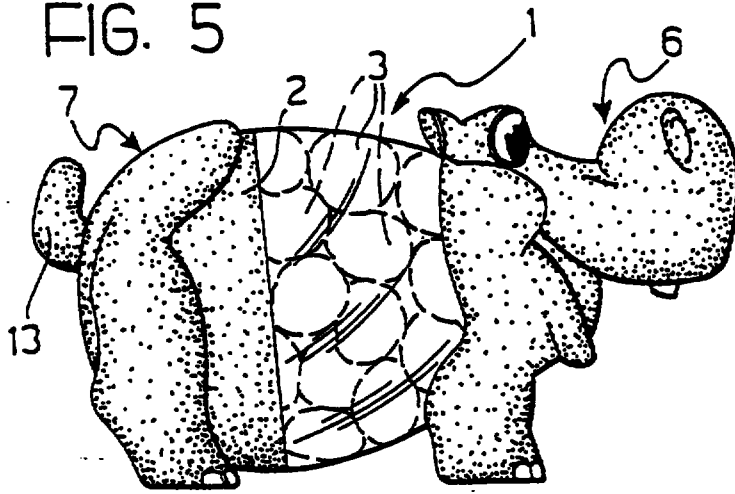


FIG. 6

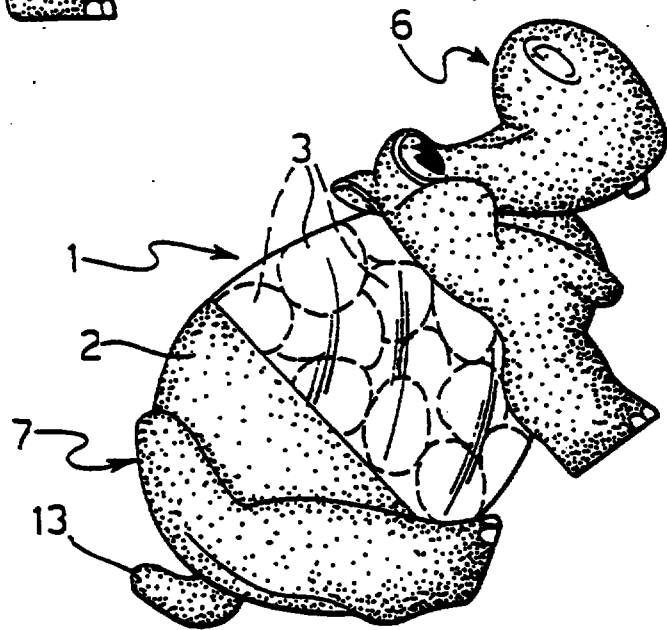


FIG. 7

