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MOISTURE-ABSORBING DEVICE

The present invention relates to a moisture-absorbing device being in the form of a tube, which in its longitudinal direction is divided into an upper chamber containing a moisture-absorbing agent and a lower chamber containing a liquid-collecting means and communicating with the upper chamber via a liquid-permeable means.

WO 93/14996 discloses a first prior-art moisture-absorbing device of this kind, which is adapted to absorb moisture in a container whose walls have wall-stiffening folds forming vertical grooves on the inside of the walls, and which, to this end, is arranged in such a groove. In this prior-art device, the tube is made of a fine-meshed steel wire netting. The upper chamber contains a moisture-absorbing agent in the form of flakes of calcium chloride, and the lower chamber contains a liquid-collecting means in the form of liquid-absorbing particles of an agent that is marketed under the trade-name Skamol. In this device, the liquid-permeable means between the upper and the lower chamber consists of a partition in the form of a steel wire netting. The calcium-chloride flakes and the Skamol particles are larger than the meshes in the steel wire netting forming the tube and they are therefore retained in the tube, while air may enter. These flakes and particles are also larger than the meshes of the steel wire netting forming the partition and they are therefore retained in the respective chambers, while liquid may pass through the partition.

The above prior-art device suffers from certain drawbacks. If the device is handled carelessly, for instance during transport, the steel wire netting forming the tube can easily be damaged, thus allowing flakes and particles to escape from the tube. When the liquid-ab-



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sorbing agent is saturated with liquid, liquid can escape from the device and cause damage to the goods kept in the container.

WO 95/26914 discloses a second prior-art moisture-absorbing device, which is of the kind stated by way of introduction and, in the same way as the above-mentioned first prior-art device, is adapted to be arranged in a vertical groove in a container, the tube being made of corrugated fibreboard coated with plastic and having at least one opening on a level with the upper chamber. A netting element, which has at least one fine-meshed netting portion, is attached to the inside of the tube, in such a manner that the netting portion is positioned in front of said opening. The liquid-permeable means between the upper and the lower chamber comprises a non-return valve means, which is liquid permeable only in the direction away from the upper chamber to the lower chamber. The liquid-collecting means consists of a plastic bag, which is connected to the liquid-permeable means.

In the second prior-art device, the above drawbacks of the first known device have been obviated. However, the second prior-art device is somewhat complicated to manufacture as a plurality of gluing operations are needed and several operational steps are required for mounting the plastic bag.

In a third prior-art moisture-absorbing device, which is disclosed in WO 97/43193 and which is of the kind mentioned by way of introduction, the tube is an extruded plastic tube, which in its longitudinal direction is divided into an upper chamber containing a moisture-absorbing agent, and a liquid-collecting lower chamber communicating with the upper chamber via a grating element. The tube has an opening on a level with the upper chamber. A netting element, which has a fine-meshed netting portion, is attached to the tube, so that the netting portion is positioned in front of the opening.

The tube is closed at its lower end to permit the collection of liquid in the lower chamber.

In the third prior-art device, the above drawbacks of the first and second prior-art devices are eliminated. However, the third prior-art device has, as well as the other two prior-art devices, the important inconvenience of being relatively bulky and thus taking up a great deal of space during storage and transport.

An object of the present invention is to provide a moisture-absorbing device, in which also the last-mentioned drawback has been eliminated and which moreover is very simple and cheap to manufacture.

According to the present invention, this object is achieved by means of a moisture-absorbing device in the form of a tube, which in its longitudinal direction is divided into an upper chamber containing a moisture-absorbing agent and a lower chamber containing a liquid-collecting means and communicating with the upper chamber via a liquid-permeable means, the tube having at least one opening on a level with the upper chamber, and a netting element, which has at least one netting portion, being attached to the tube, in such a manner that the netting portion is positioned in front of said opening, said device being characterised in that the tube consists of a plastic tube which is closed at its lower end and made of flexible plastic sheet, the upper portion of the plastic tube forming the upper chamber and its lower portion forming the lower chamber as well as the liquid-collecting means.

In a preferred embodiment, the moisture-absorbing agent is included in a filtering tube, which is made of an air- as well as liquid-permeable filtering material and which is arranged in the upper chamber substantially in front of said opening. The filtering tube is preferably closed at its lower end, the filtering material at this end forming the liquid-permeable means. Suitably,

the filtering tube has a smaller cross-sectional area than the plastic tube has in its upper portion.

The invention will now be described in more detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

5 Fig. 1 is a front view showing a plastic tube for the manufacture of a device according to the invention.

Fig. 2 is a plan view showing a netting element.

Fig. 3 shows a corner portion of a container, in which a device according to the invention is placed.

10 Fig. 4 is a vertical section on a larger scale along the line IV-IV in Fig. 3.

Fig. 1 illustrates a plastic tube 1 which is closed at its lower end and made of flexible plastic sheet, e.g. of ethylene plastic, and of which a moisture-absorbing
15 device 2 (Fig. 3) according to the invention is to be manufactured.

The moisture-absorbing device 2 according to the invention is advantageously used in a container 3 (Fig. 3), which has vertical pockets or grooves 4 which are formed
20 on the inside of the container walls by the wall-stiffening folds of the container 3. The device 2 is suitably suspended in such a groove 4 by means of a hook 5.

A rectangular opening 6 is formed in the upper part of the front wall of the plastic tube 1.

25 Fig. 2 shows a plate-shaped netting element 7 which is injection moulded of ethylene plastic and which has a rectangular netting portion 8 surrounded by a rectangular frame 9. The netting portion 8 is also surrounded by a collar 10 protruding from one side of the netting element 7. The collar 10 has an outer circumferential shape
30 corresponding to the opening 6 and protrudes a distance from the netting element 7 to extend into the opening 6. In its lower portion, the netting element 7 has two horizontal strips 11 (see also Fig. 4) which are substantially hook-shaped in cross-section and which are elastically yieldable in the vertical direction so as to
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provide a snap connection as described in more detail below.

A grating element 12, which is injection moulded of ethylene plastic and shown in cross-section in Fig. 4, has a grating plate 13 surrounded by a frame 14. The grating element 12 is arranged in the tube 1 in order to divide this into an upper chamber and a lower chamber, which are interconnected by means of the grating plate 13.

When manufacturing the device 2, a circumferential glue line is applied to the frame 9 of the netting element 7, after which the netting element 7 is placed over the opening 6, so that the collar 10 formed around the netting portion 8 is introduced into the opening 6. The netting element 7 is pressed against the outside of the tube 1 to be glued to the same. Subsequently, the grating element 12 is introduced into the tube 1 via its open upper end, after which the two strips 11 of the netting element 7 are moved into snapping engagement with a portion of the grating element frame 14 (see Fig. 4). The netting element 7 then holds the grating element 12 in place in the tube 1.

A filtering tube 15 which is made of an air- as well as liquid-permeable filtering material, such as polyester, and which contains a moisture-absorbing agent 16, for instance, in the form of flakes of calcium chloride, is introduced into the upper chamber of the tube 1. The filtering tube 15 is closed at its lower end, which in the illustrated embodiment (see Fig. 4) rests on the grating plate 13 of the grating element 12. The upper portion of the plastic tube 1 is folded together with the upper portion of the filtering tube 15 along a horizontal line 17 to be closed. The upper portion of the plastic tube 1 and the filtering tube 15 is fixed in the folded position by stapling or heat-welding. A hole (not shown), which is intended for the hook 15, is punched in the folded upper portion of the device 2.

When the filtering tube 15, which is closed at its lower end, is connected in this manner in its upper portion with the plastic tube 1 and suspended together with the same by means of the hook 5, the grating element 12 can be omitted, as the filtering material itself at the lower end of the filtering tube 15 can form a liquid-permeable means between the upper and the lower chamber of the plastic tube 1.

Finally, a protective film (not shown) is applied across the opening 6 to cover this. The protective film is, of course, removed when the device is to be used.

When the device is in operation, air enters the upper chamber through the netting portion 8 and the opening 6, and moisture contained in the air is absorbed by the moisture-absorbing agent 16 in the filtering tube 15. The resulting liquid flows through the closed lower end of the filtering tube 15 and the grating plate 13 down into the lower chamber, where it is collected.

The moisture-absorbing capacity of the device 2 is considerably improved by the filtering tube 15, as shown in Fig. 3, having a smaller cross-sectional area than the plastic tube 1 has in its upper portion, which makes the filtering tube 15 accessible to air along its entire circumference and not only along the part of the circumference which is situated in front of the opening 6.

The device 2 according to the invention has its full length (e.g. about 1 m) in its operating position, e.g. when suspended in a container, while in its storage and transport position it has only about half this length as the lower part and the upper part of the plastic tube 1 as well as the upper part of the filtering tube 15 can be folded over the netting element 7.

CLAIMS

1. A moisture-absorbing device in the form of a tube
5 (1), which in its longitudinal direction is divided into
an upper chamber containing a moisture-absorbing agent
(16) and a lower chamber containing a liquid-collecting
means and communicating with the upper chamber via a
liquid-permeable means (12), the tube (1) having at least
10 one opening (6) on a level with the upper chamber, and a
netting element (7), which has at least one netting por-
tion (8), being attached to the tube (1), in such a man-
ner that the netting portion (8) is positioned in front
of said opening (6), c h a r a c t e r i s e d in that
15 the tube consists of a plastic tube (1) which is closed
at its lower end and made of flexible plastic sheet, the
upper portion of the plastic tube forming the upper cham-
ber and its lower portion forming the lower chamber as
well as the liquid-collecting means.
- 20 2. A device according to claim 1, c h a r a c -
t e r i s e d in that the moisture-absorbing agent (16)
is included in a filtering tube (15), which is made of an
air- as well as liquid-permeable filtering material and
which is arranged in the upper chamber substantially in
25 front of said opening (6).
3. A device according to claim 2, c h a r a c -
t e r i s e d in that the filtering tube (15) is closed
at its lower end, the filtering material at this end
forming the liquid-permeable means.
- 30 4. A device according to claim 2 or 3, c h a r -
a c t e r i s e d in that the filtering tube (15) has a
smaller cross-sectional area than the plastic tube (1)
has in its upper portion.