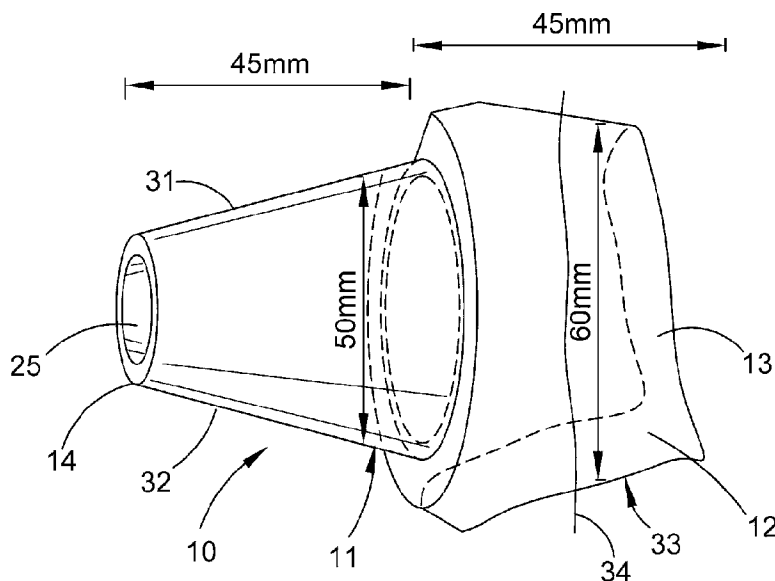




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(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

The present invention relates to an improved mask apparatus for veterinary applications. The mask may be used for dogs in particular. Most prior art masks are conical. This leads to problems in comfort and effectiveness. The present mask has a cross sectional profile and an opening shaped similar to an animal's muzzle. It has a flat top and a flat bottom, slightly wider than the top, and rounded sides. It also extends backwardly from the top of the opening to the bottom of the opening, so as to comfortably cover the commissure of the animal's lips.

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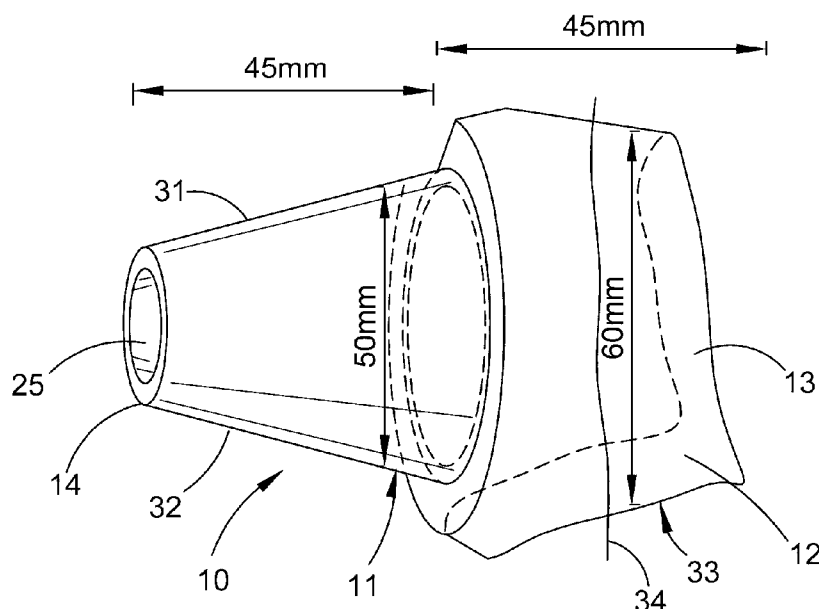


FIGURE 3

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to an improved mask apparatus for veterinary applications. The mask may be used for dogs in particular. Most prior art masks are conical. This leads to problems in comfort and effectiveness. The present mask has a cross sectional profile and an opening shaped similar to an animal's muzzle. It has a flat top and a flat bottom, slightly wider than the top, and rounded sides. It also extends backwardly from the top of the opening to the bottom of the opening, so as to comfortably cover the commissure of the animal's lips.

AN IMPROVED MASK APPARATUS FOR VETERINARY APPLICATIONS

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to an improved mask
5 apparatus for veterinary application, and, particularly,
but not exclusively, to a mask which can be used for
treatment of animals such as dogs.

Background of the Invention

In veterinary practice, it is known to treat animals
10 using masks arranged to fit over the respiratory openings
of the animal. The mask may be used to deliver therapy,
medication, anaesthetic and for other treatments.

Current animal masks tend to be of similar form,
generally conical in shape with a circular opening to
15 receive the nose and mouth of the animal. The broad base
of the cone forms the opening proximal to the animal's
face and, the narrower part of the cone is distal to the
base. The distal end of the cone may be flattened and may
have a hole for the delivery of fluids into the mask. The
20 mask may be connectable to a hose for the delivery of
fluids via the hole.

These prior art masks usually incorporate a
diaphragm at the circular opening to attempt to seal to
the muzzle of the animal being treated.

25 These prior art masks tend to be quite uncomfortable
for the animal to wear, and can be ill-fitting, causing
stress and discomfort. For the delivery of drugs and for
therapy which requires the mask to be worn for a period
of time, it can be necessary to sedate the animal so that
30 the mask will not be removed or damaged. This can be
counterproductive to the treatment of the animal.

It is also very difficult to get an effective seal with this type of mask. In order to cover the commissure of the lips, the conical mask must be pushed tightly up the animal's snout, resulting in considerable discomfort.

5 Also, even when pushed on firmly, sometimes the commissure extends out of the mask.

The volume of these conical masks can also be relatively large, leading to a relatively large dead space volume in the mask. This can lead to rebreathing of
10 gases such as CO₂, which is not desirable.

Distress and discomfort is particularly marked in animals with dolicephalic faces, and where the conical opening of the mask must be pushed as far back as possible on the animal's muzzle to ensure that the mask
15 extends over the commissure of the lips.

Summary of Invention

In accordance with a first aspect, the present invention provides a mask for respiratory treatment of an animal, comprising a housing having walls forming an
20 enclosure arranged to receive an animal's muzzle, and forming an opening through which the muzzle is received, said housing having a distal end opposed to said opening which in operation is distal from the face of the animal, the profile of the opening being non-round, and
25 substantially flat across the top of the enclosure to avoid obscuring vision of the animal wearing the mask, wherein a portion said housing has said walls extending longitudinal from said opening partway towards said distal end and being arranged to substantially conform to
30 the shape of the muzzle of the animal and being of resilient material to hug the muzzle of an animal wearing the mask, wherein the profile of the opening is substantially oval with a flattened top and flattened

bottom and the profile is wider at the bottom than at the top.

It has been found that, in at least an embodiment, the mask apparatus has the advantage that when it is
5 being worn by an animal, such as a dog, it does not cause as much stress to the animal as the currently available conical masks.

In an embodiment, the cross-sectional profile of the housing transverse to the direction of receipt of the
10 muzzle of an animal is generally of a similar profile for at least a portion of that housing extending from the opening, as the profile of the opening. It may taper inwardly from the opening.

In an embodiment, a portion of the walls of the mask
15 proximate to the opening are of a soft material arranged to hug the muzzle of an animal wearing the mask. In an embodiment, the opening portion of the walls of the housing are formed of form fitting silicone.

In an embodiment, the walls of the mask proximate to
20 the opening are formed as a cushion or curtain to form an internal seal against the muzzle of the mask in use. This cushion or curtain may be similar in form to the current design of human CPAP masks.

In an embodiment, the profile of the opening of the
25 mask is arranged to extend backwardly from the top of the mask to the bottom of the mask in use, and the mask is arranged to cover over the commissure of the lips of the animal .

In an embodiment, an advantage of this profile is
30 that the commissure of the lips of the animal is covered, without it being necessary to force the mask up the muzzle so that the top part confronts the eyes and causes discomfort. The top part of the mask, in use, sits away

from the eyes so as to reduce interference with the animal's vision.

Brief description of the Figures

Features and advantages of the present invention
5 will become apparent from the following description of embodiments thereof, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a prior art mask apparatus for an animal;

10 Figure 2 is a further perspective view of the prior art mask apparatus of Figure 1 shown in place with a diagrammatic representation of an animal's muzzle and head;

Figure 2a is a view from the rear, or proximal end,
15 of the mask apparatus of Figure 1 ;

Figure 2b is a side view of another prior art mask shown in place with a view of an animal's muzzle and head.

Figure 3 is a perspective view from the side of a
20 mask apparatus in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a view from the rear, or proximal end of the mask apparatus of the embodiment of Figure 3;

Figure 5 is a perspective view from the side of the
25 mask apparatus of the embodiment of Figure 3, shown in place on a diagrammatic representation of a muzzle and head of an animal;

Figure 6a, 6b and 6c are diagrammatic views from the rear of mask apparatus in accordance with embodiments of
30 the present invention, to illustrate dimensions of the apparatus for different sized animals;

Figure 7 is a perspective view from one side of a mask apparatus in accordance with a further embodiment of

the present invention, shown positioned on a diagrammatic representation of an animal's muzzle and head;

Figure 8 is a perspective view from one side of a mask apparatus in accordance with a further embodiment of the present invention, shown positioned on a representation of an animal's muzzle and head;

Figure 9 is a perspective view from one side of a mask apparatus in accordance with a further embodiment of the present invention; and

Figure 10 is a top view of the mask apparatus of Figure 9.

Detailed Description of embodiments of the invention

Figures 1, 2, 2a and 2b illustrate a prior art mask apparatus for use in veterinary applications. The mask apparatus is generally designated by reference numeral 1.

These types of mask apparatus are used for a number of applications in the veterinary area. For example, masks such as this can be used for anaesthesia, for oxygen therapy, for delivering medication such as asthma medication, delivering medication during recovery from anaesthesia, delivering oxygen during recovery or delivering any other fluids, for ventilation, and for many other applications.

Referring to Figures 1 and 2, this prior art mask 1 comprises a mask housing having walls 2 which form an enclosure 3 for receiving an animal's muzzle 4 (Figure 2). An opening 5, through which the muzzle 2 is received is formed by the walls 2. A resilient diaphragm 6, usually of rubber or other elastic material, is mounted about the opening 5. The muzzle 2 of the animal is placed through the opening 5 and the diaphragm 6 provides at least a partial seal between the muzzle and the mask, and also assists in retention of the mask on the animal.

The mask 1 has an opening 7 at the distal end 8 the mask. Fluids, such as oxygen, can be introduced through this opening.

It can be seen that the mask apparatus 1 is
5 generally conical in shape, extending from a wider base, at the proximally positioned opening 5 of the mask apparatus 1 to a narrower distal end 8. The opening 5 is circular in profile, and the mask apparatus 1 extends longitudinally from the proximal to the distal end in a
10 narrowing cone shape with a circular transverse cross-section. Figure 2a is a view from the proximal end of the mask apparatus 1 showing the circular cross-section substantially extending throughout the conical mask 1.

In practice, it is found that this style of mask
15 causes discomfort to the animals. Animals will often try to remove the mask, leading to damage and non-satisfactory treatment. In order to prevent animals interfering with the mask, the animal patients are often sedated. Sedation can lead to other complications.

20 In order for the mask to cover the commissure, it must be pushed back a long way along the animal's face, as illustrated in Figure 2. This leads to the top part of the base of the cone blocking the animal's view. This "confronting" of the animal's eyes causes considerable
25 discomfort for the animal.

Even with the mask wall pushed back a long way along the animal's face, it may still be difficult to cover the commissure of the lips, so there can often be leakage around the opening 5 of the mask. The animal can breathe
30 in ambient gases through a commissure that is not covered.

The diameter of the conical mask is often 30-50% above the minimum size that would fit the animal's nose tightly, because room must be made for the diaphragm. As

discussed above, this causes obstruction to the animal's vision when pushed up to the eyes and causes discomfort. It also means the volume of the mask is relatively large, increasing dilution of additional fluids and increasing
5 dead space, causing potential rebreathing of CO₂. For example, in Figure 2, it can be seen that there is considerable dead space where illustrated by reference numeral 9.

Figure 2b shows another type of prior art mask 10,
10 which in this embodiment does not have a diaphragm. This has to be pushed even more tightly on to the animal's head, causing further discomfort.

As well as these types of prior art mask causing considerable discomfort, and resulting in intolerance for
15 long term wearing by the animal, it is also very difficult to get an effective seal. The lack of the effective seal prevents these types of masks being used for delivery of any form of positive pressure ventilation.

20 A mask apparatus in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in Figures 3 to 5.

Referring to the figures, the mask apparatus, generally designated by reference numeral 10 comprises a housing 11 having walls 12 which form the housing. The
25 walls 12 also define an opening 13 through which the muzzle of an animal (see Figure 5) may be received in operation.

The mask 10 has a distal end 14 which, in operation, is distal from the face of the animal. Referring to
30 Figure 4, the mask has a "TOP" and "BOTTOM" as indicated. In use, the Top of the mask apparatus 10 is positioned on the top of the animal's muzzle (see Figure 5).

In relation to the Top and Bottom, the mask has a Lateral axis 20, extending across the mask from left to right as indicated in Figure 4, an Upright axis 16 extending from the Bottom to the Top of the mask and a
5 Longitudinal axis 17 represented by a broken line in Figure 4 but in fact extending into the page from the crossover of the Lateral 20 and Upright axis 16 to the distal end 14 of the mask. The Left side of the mask is designated by reference numeral 18 and the Right side by
10 reference numeral 19.

The opening 13 is defined by the walls 12 of the mask. As can be seen best in Figure 4, the opening 13 is non-round in shape. Also, it can be seen that, in this embodiment, the Top is relatively flat across from Left
15 side 18 to Right side 19.

It has been found, that when this mask is worn by animals, such as a dog, as shown in Figure 5, it does not cause as much stress and discomfort as the prior art masks. In fact, in experiments, it has been found that
20 animals such as dogs are happy to wear this apparatus without requiring sedation or even requiring a strap to secure the mask to their face. Of course, a strap can be provided for security.

The applicants believe that one of the problems with
25 the prior art masks is that, because of its conical shape in particular, it tends to interfere with the animal's vision, because the base of the cone of the diaphragm tend to obstruct the animal's vision (see Figure 2) . Because of the flattened top 18 of the mask of this
30 embodiment, it is believed that there is less interference and this may be one reason why the animal is more tolerant of this type of mask.

Note that at the distal end of the mask 14, there may be a hole 25 through which fluids can be passed for

treatment and therapy of the animal. The hole 25 may be able to be connected to a conduit such as a tube for the passage of treatment fluids. This has a similar function to the hole 7 of the prior art mask of Figures 1 and 2.

5 As well as the flattened top, referring to Figure 4 it can be seen that the profile of the mask, at transverse cross-section of the opening 13 is generally non-round. There is also a flattened Bottom, opposite the Top, and relatively flat sides 18, 19, forming a
10 substantially rectangular or elongated oval shape. In this embodiment the Bottom is slightly wider than the Top. This shape is more appropriate to conform with the shape of an animal's muzzle such as dog, for example, than the round opening of the prior art conical masks.
15 The longitudinal dimension of the mask can be relatively long, so that the mask can accommodate a dolicephalic snout. The mask may also be shaped to accommodate brachycefalic muzzles and may have a shorter longitudinal dimension for this.

20 In this embodiment, the same cross-sectional profile of the non-round opening extends longitudinally into the mask for at least a portion of the longitudinal dimension. In some embodiments it may taper inwardly.

 Another feature of this mask apparatus design is
25 illustrated in Figure 5. The Bottom of the mask is set backwardly in the longitudinal direction from the Top of the opening the mask, so that the Top of the mask sits away from the eyes. The Bottom extending backwardly, enables the sides of the mask to extend over the
30 commissure of the animal's mouth in use (the commissure is indicated by reference numeral 30 in Figure 5) .

 A portion 31 of the mask (see Figure 5 and Figure 3) towards the proximal end of the mask apparatus is in conical form. The portion 32 towards the distal end, is,

as discussed above, not conical, but shaped to accommodate the shape of the muzzle of the animal, in this case a dog. Note that the portion 31 of the mask need not be conical in shape but could be any other shape which is still able to receive the snout of the animal. Referring to Figure 3, a portion 33 of the mask, extending between the opening 13 and the line 34 shown on Figure 3, partway towards the distal end 14 from the opening 13, is made of resilient material which is able to flexibly conform with the muzzle of the animal where it receives the animal's muzzle, and to form a comfortable interface with the animal's muzzle, which can facilitate a seal. In an embodiment, this portion 33 is formed of a resilient silicone material. This has been found to be comfortable for the animal. The rest of the mask may be made of firmer plastics material in order to facilitate retention of shape than the portion 33. The use of this resilient portion of the mask apparatus, avoids the need for a diaphragm (such as used in the prior art masks).

In an embodiment, the portion 33 of the mask may also include an internal cushion type seal, similar in design to current human CPAP masks. The seal may be in the form of a cushion, or a curtain folded back on itself, to form a better seal against the animal's face and also to maintain comfort.

Embodiments of the present invention may be advantageously used for CPAP ventilatory support in conscious animals.

As discussed above, the portion 31 of the masks need not be conical. It could be shaped so as to reduce the dead space at the end of the mask. It could be blunt ended, for example. It could be any other shape.

Figure 8 shows another embodiment of a mask apparatus in accordance with the present invention. The mask apparatus in this embodiment comprises walls 100 and an opening 101 arranged to receive the animal's muzzle.

5 The bottom 102 of this mask extends back relatively more than in the previous embodiment. It easily covers the commissure of the animal's mouth. The top part 103 sits away from the eyes, as with the previous embodiment. The distal portion 104 of the mask apparatus is "blunter", so

10 as to reduce dead space. A projection 105 is arranged to receive a tube for providing fluids.

Masks in accordance with embodiments of the present invention may be of different dimensions to accommodate different sizes of animal muzzle. Figure 6a to 6c gives

15 three examples of dimensioning of masks in accordance with the embodiment of Figures 3 to 5.

Figure 6a, shows a diagram of the proximal end of the mask, showing the profile of the proximal end to show dimensions, in this case, 60mm vertically and 45mm

20 horizontally. The mask may be 80mm to 90mm in a longitudinal direction. This may be useful to suit a small dog, such as a 12 to 15kg animal. Figure 3 shows other dimensions of this type of mask for a small dog. The dimensions are shown in millimeters.

25 Figure 6b is for a medium dog, and the dimensions would include a longitudinal direction of in the order of 100mm. Although this is a bigger mask, it can be seen that the dimensions are in the same proportion as with Figure 6a.

30 Figure 6c illustrates the profile of a mask which might be used for a big dog, such as a 25 to 35kg animal. The mask and the longitudinal direction will be in the order of 120mm long.

Figure 7 shows a further embodiment of a mask apparatus in accordance with the present invention. This further embodiment is generally indicated by reference numeral 10a. The same reference numerals have been
5 allocated to components of mask apparatus 10a which are equivalent to components of the embodiment of Figure 3 to 5 and no further description will be given of these.

As well as a hole 25 in the distal end 14 of the mask apparatus of this embodiment, there is also a hole
10 40 in the top of the mask, over the animal's muzzle. In operation, fluids for treatment of the animal are introduced through the top hole 25 and exit through the hole 25. This reduces the "deadspace" in the mask and therefore facilitates treatment of the animal. This is an
15 application of the applicant's earlier invention, as described in Australian Patent Application No. 2006252044, the contents of which are included herein by reference.

The hole 40 may be anywhere in the mask as long as
20 it is close to the muzzle of the animal and results in the flow indicated by arrows 41 and 42, reducing the deadspace in the mask.

Figures 9 and 10 show further embodiment of a mask apparatus, generally designated by 110. The housing 111
25 has an opening 112. The opening is surrounded by a folded back flexible cushion 113, which in this embodiment is made of silicone. This may be similar in form to the cushion used in human CPAP masks.

Masks in accordance with embodiments of the present
30 invention can be used for all the same treatments that prior art masks can be used for. These include the treatments discussed above, and also other therapeutic treatments, such as continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) treatments.

It will be appreciated that the mask apparatus of the present invention is not limited to the dimensions shown and described with reference to Figure 6, and other figures, and other dimensions could be used to
5 accommodate different patient sizes

The mask apparatus of the present invention is not limited for use with dogs, but could be used for other animals, particularly animals having snouts, including pigs, horses, and other animals.

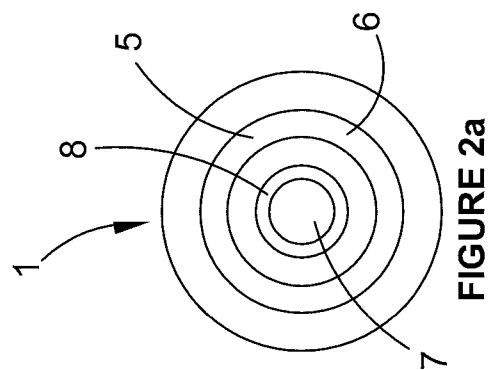
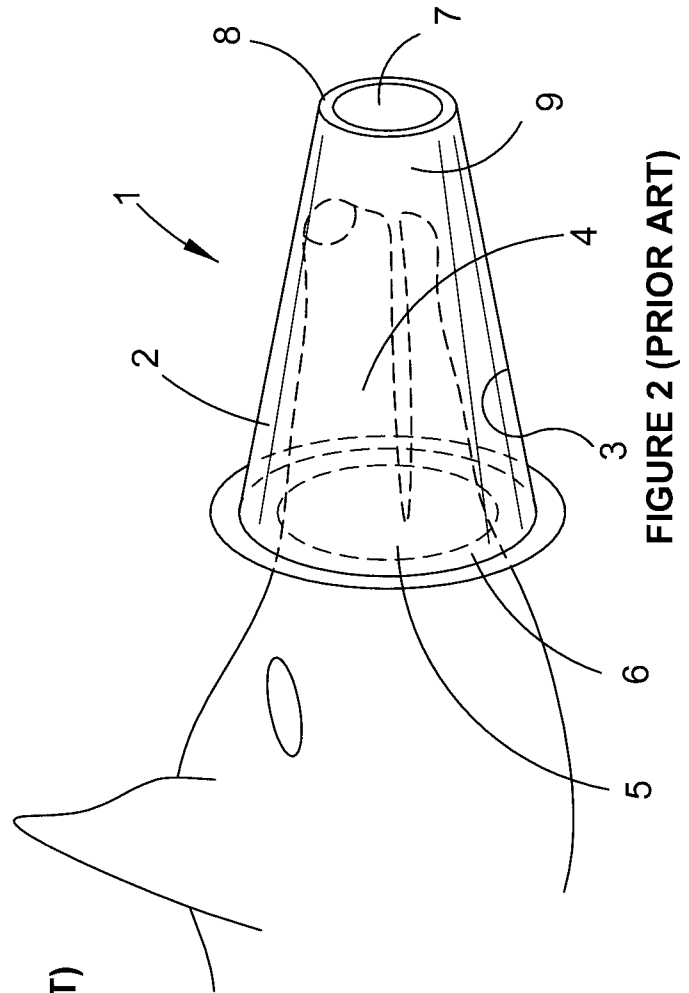
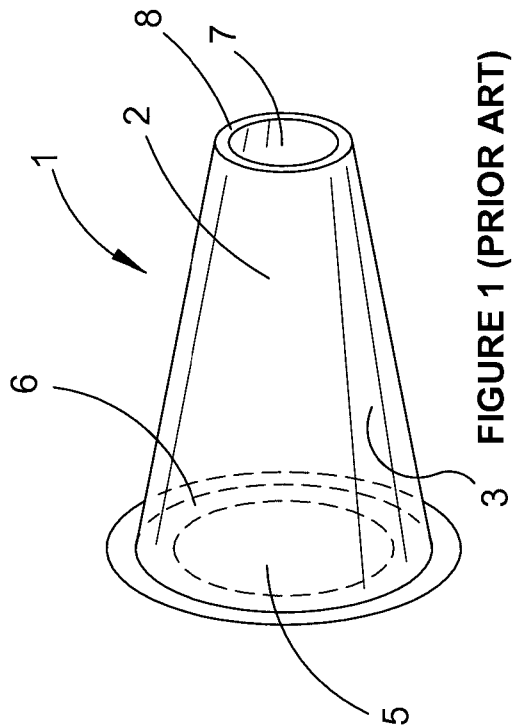
10 It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments
15 are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

Claims

1. A mask for respiratory treatment of an animal, comprising a housing having walls forming an enclosure arranged to receive an animal's muzzle, and forming an opening through which the muzzle is received, said housing having a distal end opposed to said opening which in operation is distal from the face of the animal, the profile of the opening being non-round and substantially flat across the top of the enclosure to avoid obscuring vision of the animal wearing the mask, wherein a portion of said housing has said walls extending longitudinally from said opening partway towards said distal end and being arranged to substantially conform to the shape of the muzzle of the animal and being of a resilient material to hug the muzzle of an animal wearing the mask, the profile of the opening is substantially oval with a flattened top and flattened bottom and the profile is wider at the bottom than at the top.
2. A mask in accordance with claim 1, wherein the resilient material is form-fitting silicone.
3. A mask in accordance with claim 1, wherein the profile of the opening of the mask being arranged to extend backwardly from the top of the mask to the bottom of the mask in use, and arranged to cover over a commissure of lips of the animal.

4. A mask in accordance with any one of claims 1 to 3 further comprising an internal seal around the opening to improve sealing between the mask and the animal's muzzle.
- 5 5. A mask as claimed in claim 4, wherein the seal is in the form of a curtain folded back on itself to form a seal with the animal's muzzle under conditions of positive pressure within the mask.
- 10 6. A mask as claimed in claim 4, wherein the seal is in the form of a cushion.

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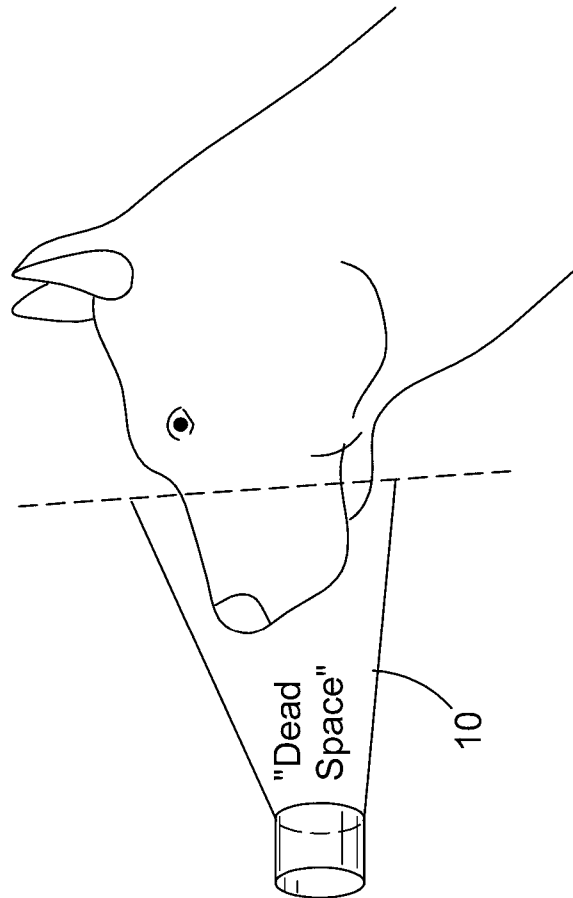


FIGURE 2b

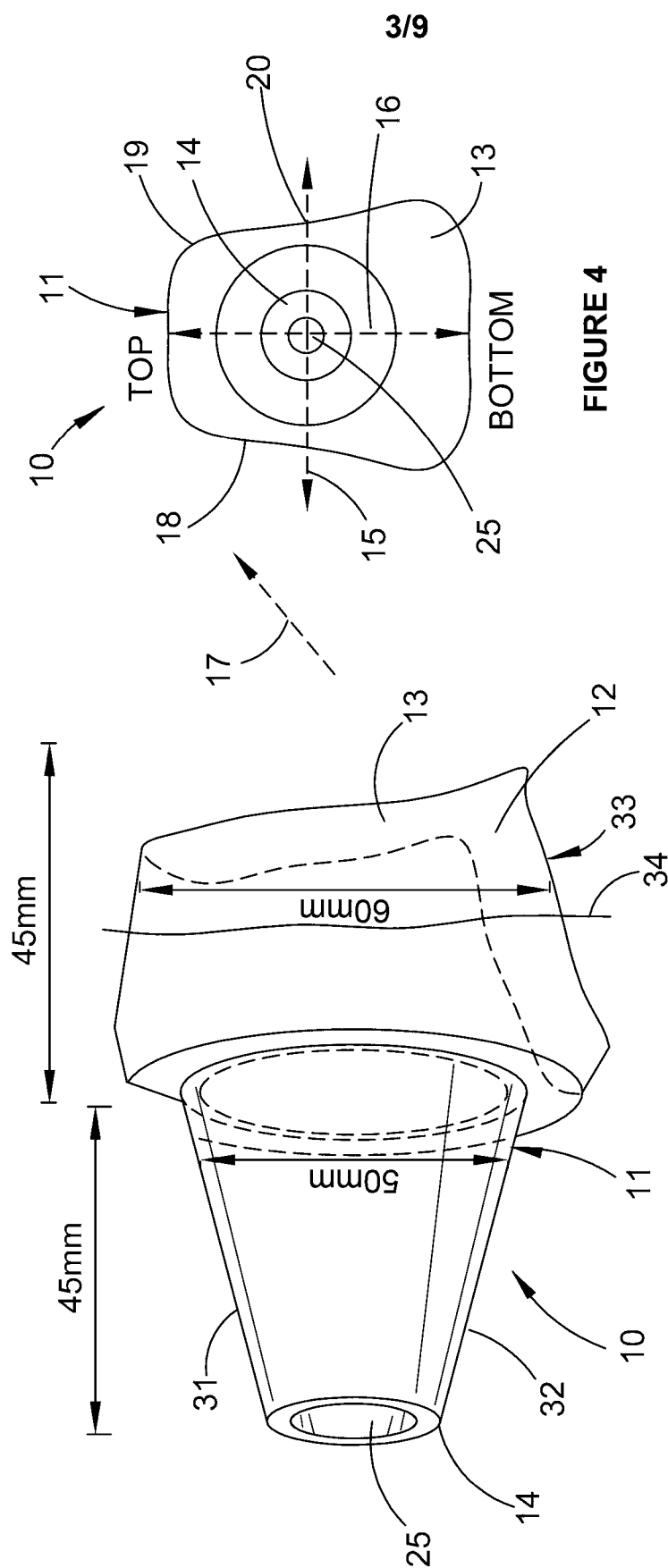


FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4

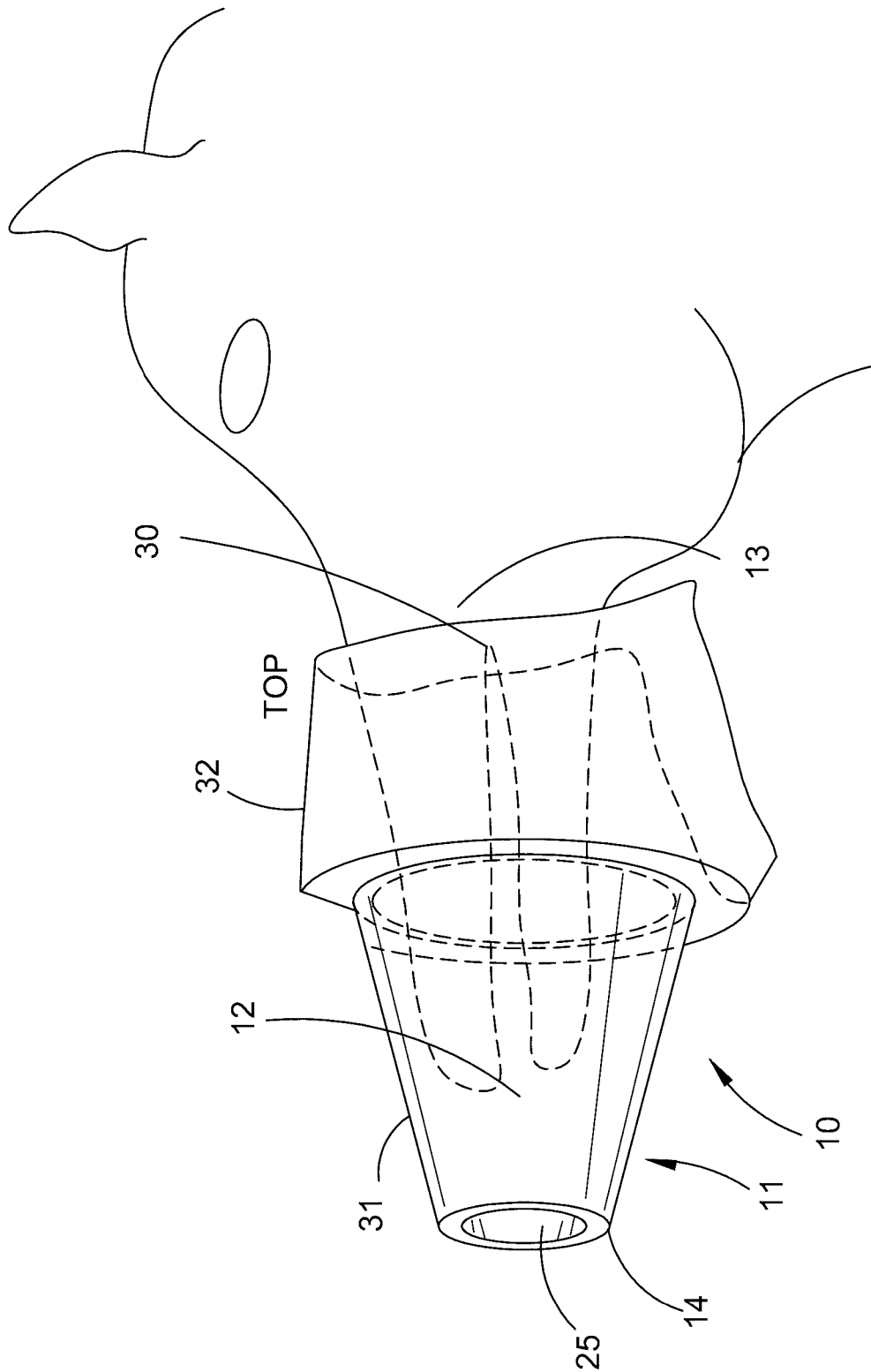
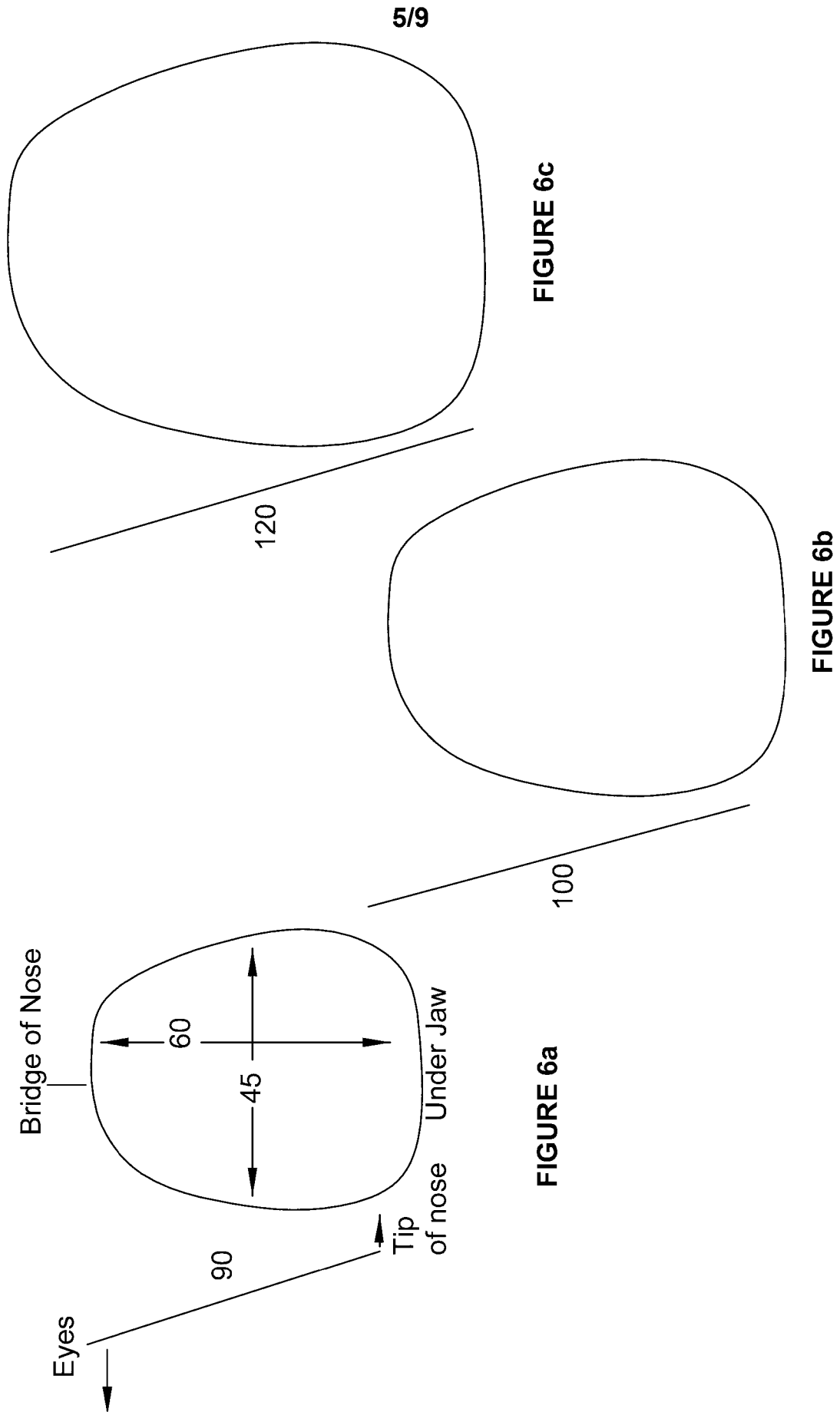


FIGURE 5



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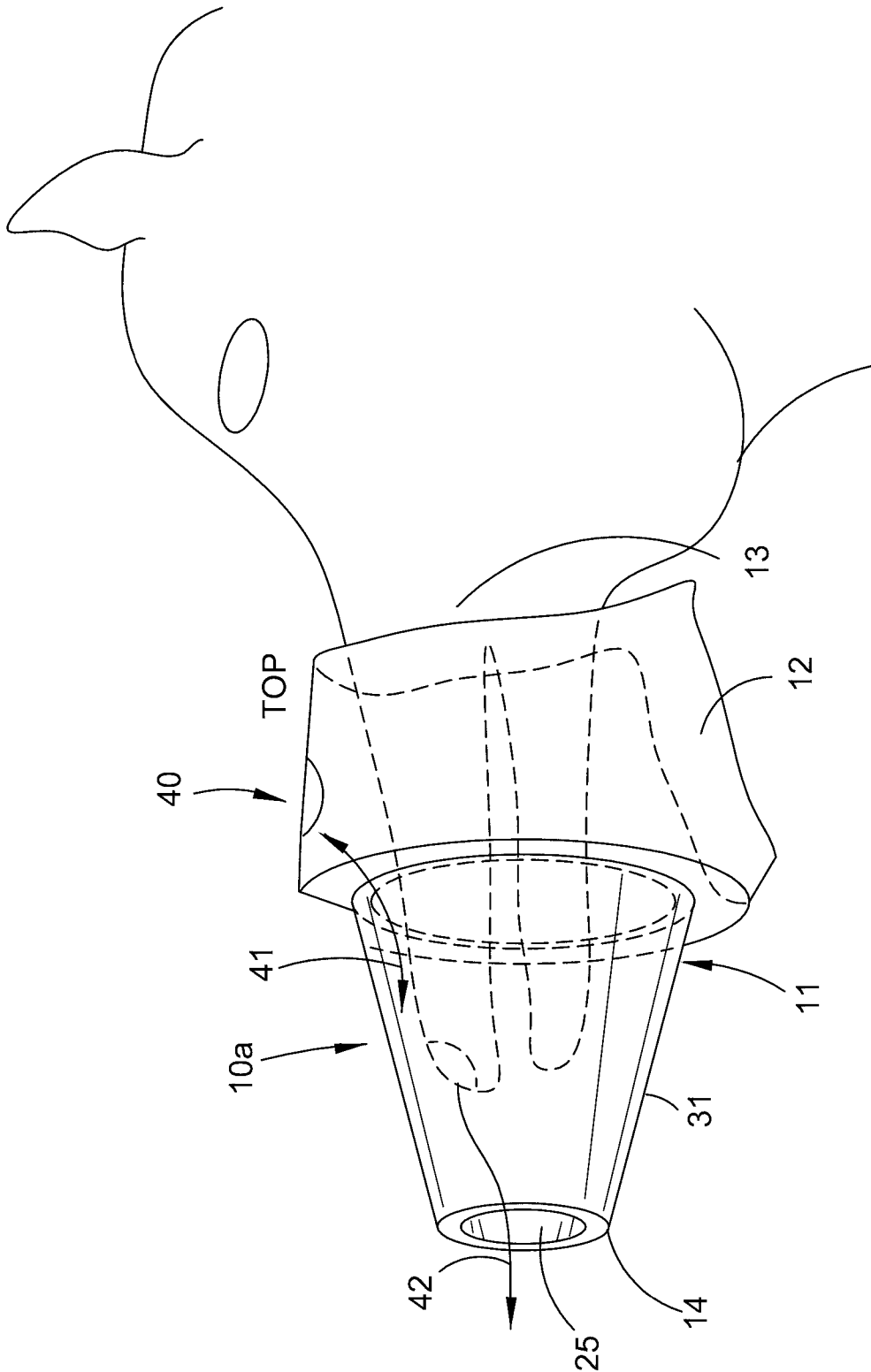


FIGURE 7

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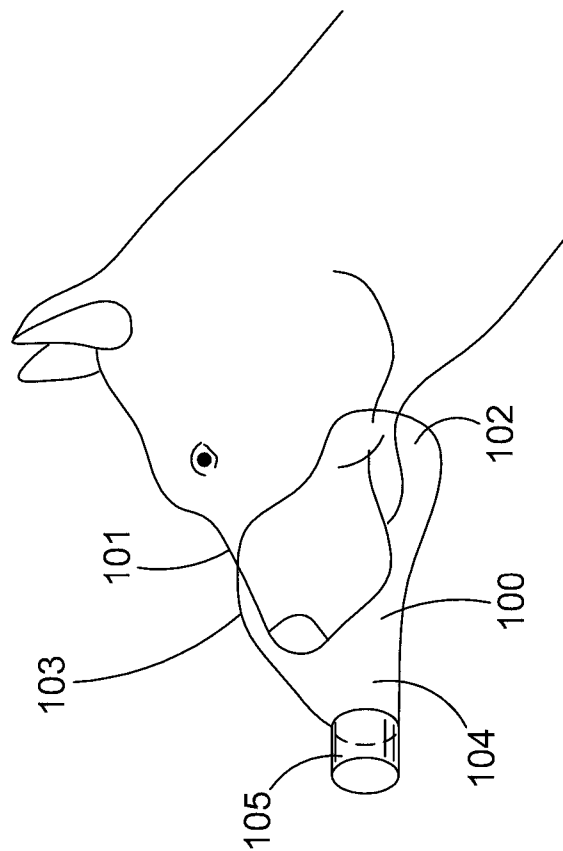


FIGURE 8

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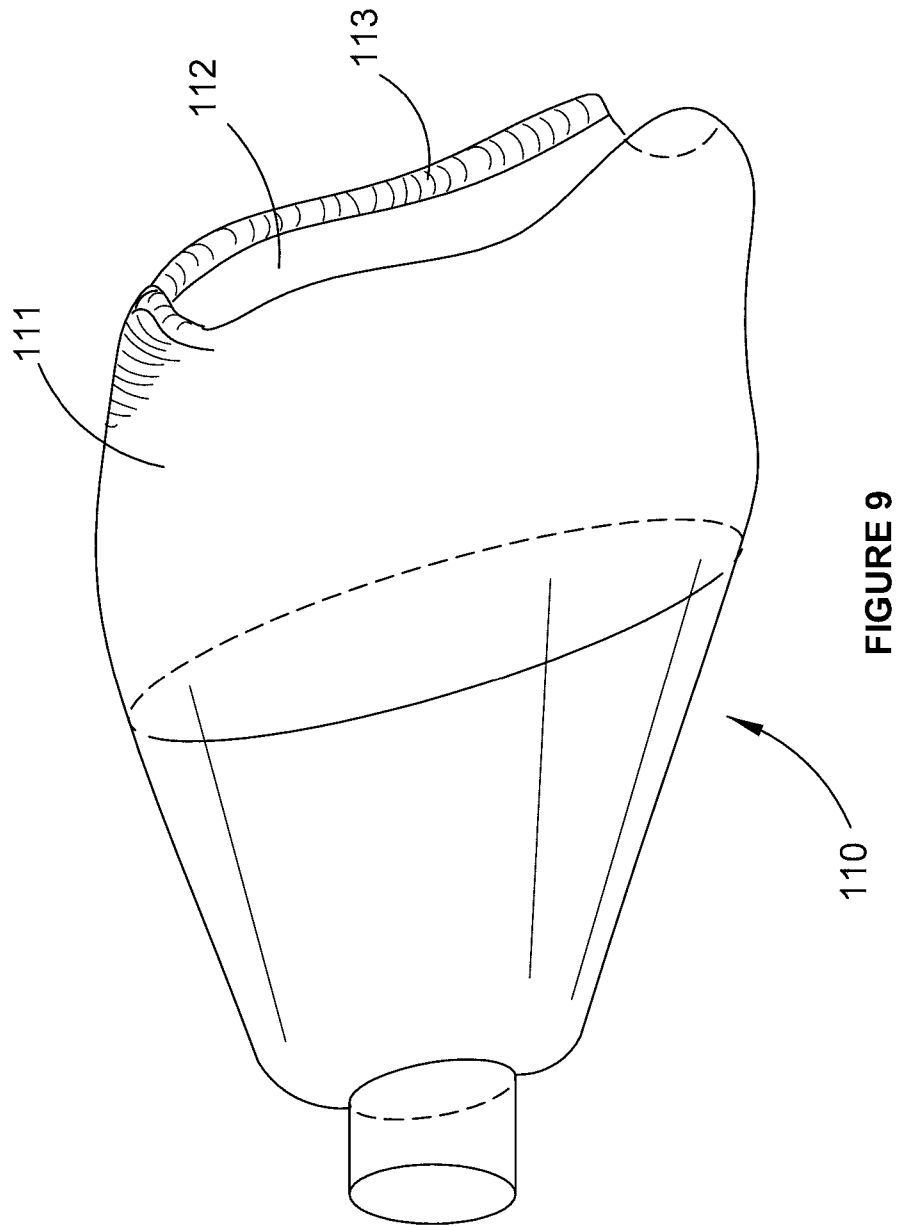


FIGURE 9

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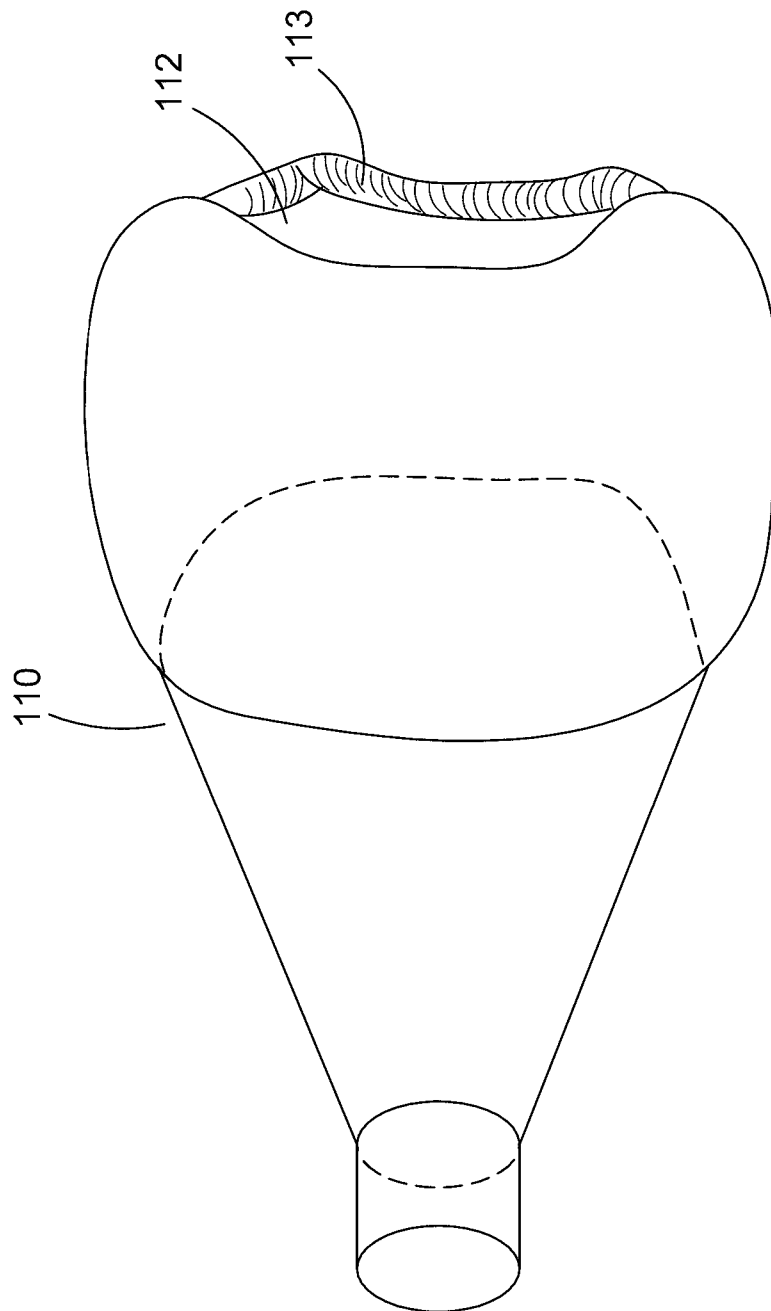


FIGURE 10

