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(54) **Apparatus for supporting a leg of an animal**

Vorrichtung zur Stützung eines Tierbeines

Appareil pour supporter une patte animale

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Description

[0001] The invention relates to an apparatus for supporting a leg of an animal, in particular a foreleg of a four-legged animal, in order to, for instance, inspect and/or treat a claw or hoof of the animal.

Such an apparatus is known from practice, for instance from FR 2 595 204, and usually comprises a supporting element on which the respective leg can be fixed in a suitable position, and a winch with which the leg can be hoisted onto the supporting element. To this end, the winch is provided with a spool and a cord that can be fastened by one end around the leg of the animal and then, with the aid of a crank or like drive element, can be wound onto the spool. Further, blocking means can be provided for blocking the unwinding of the spool so that during winding, the cord cannot be unwound through resisting movements of the animal. Also, releasing means can be provided, with which the blocking action of the blocking means can be at least temporarily eliminated, in order to give the user the opportunity to, for instance, unwind the cord to a sufficient extent for it to be fastened around the leg, or in order to, afterwards, lower the leg from the supporting element. In particular in the latter case, dangerous situations may arise through unexpected jerking movements to the cord by the animal, so that the spool and the drive element are suddenly accelerated and can inflict injuries or damage to a person or object present in the path of movement of the drive element. Due thereto, also, damage may be done to the apparatus itself, in particular to the drive element.

[0002] DE 31,14,939 discloses a winch with a spool, a drive element and blocking means to prevent the spool from rotation in the unwinding direction. The drive element is pivotally connected to the blocking means. Furthermore a fork-like end of the drive element is provided around an end of the spool. The spool is connected to the blocking means via a coupling part provided on the spool. In order to easily unwind the spool without rotation of the drive element, releasing means are operated such that the spool is able to move in lateral direction. Then, the drive element can be pivoted around a pivot axis resulting in the fork-like end displacing the spool such that the fork-like end removes the coupling part from the blocking means such that the spool is not coupled to the blocking means thereby providing a free rotatable spool.

[0003] The invention contemplates providing an apparatus of the type described hereinabove, wherein said drawback of the known apparatus is obviated, while maintaining the advantages thereof. To that end, an apparatus according to the invention is characterized by the features of claim 1. In this manner, during unwinding, the drive element can maintain a substantially fixed position, irrespective of any jerking forces applied on the spool via the cord to be unwound. Thus, the safety of the apparatus is considerably increased.

[0004] The activating of the immobilizing means is done "automatically", by designing the releasing means

such that, when the blocking means are deactivated, they instantaneously activate the immobilizing means. Thus, the immobilizing means will always be activated at the right time, and they cannot be inadvertently forgotten so that a particularly safe, foolproof apparatus is obtained.

[0005] The drive element is immobilized by uncoupling this element from the spool, at least temporarily, so that a movement of the spool, in particular a rotation in unwinding direction is not transmitted to the drive element. To that end, the drive element can for instance be uncoupled from the spool, or a connection secured against rotation between the two can be eliminated so that the spool and the drive element can rotate freely relative to each other.

[0006] The blocking means is designed to indirectly engage the spool so as to prevent rotation in unwinding direction. Therefore, use is made of a freewheel mechanism or ratchet mechanism allowing rotation of the spool in winding direction but blocking it in unwinding direction. Such a ratchet mechanism can have a relatively simple and robust construction and can absorb great forces, whereby such a mechanism is highly suitable for use in an apparatus according to the invention.

[0007] Since the blocking means and the drive element are connected to the spool via a common coupling part, while this coupling part can be connected to the spool, at wish, in a manner secured against rotation or in a rotatable manner, by means of the releasing means, the blocking means and the drive element can simultaneously be uncoupled from the spool, with one single operating movement of the releasing means, so that the blocking action of the blocking means is eliminated and the drive element is immobilized. Such an embodiment can therefore be operated in a simple and foolproof manner and can furthermore be constructed relatively simply with a minimum of parts.

[0008] The coupling part may be designed as a ring which is arranged for free rotation around an end of the spool, and the releasing means can for instance comprise a displaceable coupling pin or key which, in a coupled position, can project through the coupling part and the spool in order to connect the two parts in a manner secured against rotation and which, for the purpose of a releasing position can be (manually) removed in order to have the two parts rotate freely relative to each other.

[0009] In an advantageous embodiment, biasing means can be provided for biasing the releasing means in one of the above-mentioned positions, preferably in the coupled position. In this position, it is standard that the spool be secured against unwinding and ready to be wound without further operations being required thereto, and thus, a very safe and easy to operate apparatus is obtained.

[0010] Further, locking means can be provided, with which the releasing means can be fixed in a releasing position, in which releasing position the drive element is immobilized and the spool can be unwound. As a result, a user needs not hold the releasing means in said re-

leasing position by hand (against a biasing force) so that his hands remain free for, for instance, treating and guiding the leg.

[0011] In the further subclaims, further advantageous embodiments are described of an apparatus according to the invention, and an apparatus equipped therewith for treating a four-legged animal.

[0012] In clarification, hereinafter, an exemplary embodiment of an apparatus according to the invention and the use thereof will be further elucidated with reference to the drawing. In the drawing:

Fig. 1 shows, in perspective side view, a leg rest according to the invention, with a foreleg to be treated of an animal thereon;

Fig. 2 shows the leg rest according to Fig. 1, in side view;

Fig. 3 shows the leg rest according to Figs. 1 and 2, in bottom view, with a view on the winch; and

Fig. 4 shows, in cross-section, the winch according to Fig. 3.

[0013] The leg rest 1 shown in Figs. 1 - 4 comprises a substantially block-shaped supporting element 2 and a frame 3 with which the supporting element 2 can be connected to the fixed world W, this in a manner such that a side facing upwards of the supporting element 2 extends substantially horizontally and can thus serve as bearing face 4 for a leg P to be treated as shown in Fig. 1.

[0014] The supporting element 2 can for instance be designed as a block of wood, the side of which that serves as bearing face 4 preferably having a slight concave shape so that the leg P can be supported comfortably and the leg P can be better prevented from sliding from the bearing face.

[0015] The fixed world W can for instance be a box stall or, as is the case in the exemplary embodiment shown in Fig. 1, a cage-shaped construction in which the animal, during treatment, can be temporarily accommodated in order to limit its freedom of movement. If desired, such a construction can be designed to be wheeled. Herein, the term "fixed world" W is therefore to be interpreted broadly.

[0016] The leg rest 1 further comprises a winch 5 for winding and unwinding an elongated element such as a band or cord 6. In use, this cord 6 is fastened by one free end around the leg P to be treated, whereupon the leg P is hoisted with the winch onto the supporting element 2. If desired, the free cord end can be provided with suitable fastening means such as a loop, belt or hook (not shown) so that fastening around the leg P is simplified and/or the comfort for the animal is enhanced.

[0017] The winch 5 comprises a spool 8 (see Fig. 3) which is suspended for rotation in the frame 3 between two side pieces 9. The above-mentioned cord 6 is fastened by a first end to this spool 8 and run by the free end through the supporting element 2, via an opening 1 provided thereto, all this being arranged such that, due

to rotation of the spool 8, this cord 6 is wound in a winding direction (counter-clockwise in Fig. 2), and is unwound in an unwinding direction. For rotating the spool 8, a drive element 12 is provided which, in the example shown, is designed as a manually operable crank which is detachably coupled to an end of the spool 8 in a manner to be described further. The spool 8 further comprises blocking means 10 which, in a blocking position, allow rotation of the spool 8 in the winding direction but block in the unwinding direction.

[0018] In the exemplary embodiment shown, the blocking means 10 comprise a ratchet mechanism, provided with a toothed wheel 14, which, in a manner to be described further, is fastened to the spool 8 and can, thus, rotate along with the spool 8, a pawl 15, connected for rotation to the frame 3 and engaging, by a free end, the toothing of the wheel 14, and a stroke limiting device 13 in the form of a pin 13, arranged in the path of rotation of the pawl 15 and, thus, limiting the angle of rotation of the pawl 15 so that it cannot be rotated beyond its range of operation by too abrupt an acceleration of the wheel 14.

[0019] In the exemplary embodiment shown, the drive element (crank) 12 and the blocking means (toothed wheel) 14 are fastened to the spool 8 so they can be uncoupled via releasing means, in particular a coupling ring 18, which has been slid for rotation around a free end 17 of the spool 8 and can be coupled to this spool end 17 in a manner secured against rotation with the aid of a coupling pin 20, while the coupling pin 20 is run through opposing holes 21, 22, in the coupling ring 18 and the spool end 17, respectively.

[0020] In the exemplary embodiment shown, the coupling pin 20 is slideably connected to the crank 12 and is preferably biased in the above-mentioned coupled position, via biasing means 23, for instance a spiral spring as shown in Figs. 3 and 4. This coupled position can be eliminated by manually pulling the coupling pin 20 back against the biasing force to an uncoupled position in which the pin 20 has been pulled from the holes 21, 22 in the direction of arrow A, in Fig. 4. If desired, a locking option may be provided (not shown) for securing the coupling pin 20 in the uncoupled position so that a user can keep his both hands free for guiding the leg P. In the uncoupled position, the connection secured against rotation between the spool 8 and coupling ring 18 will be eliminated. As a result, the spool 8 will be able to rotate freely relative to the coupling ring 18 and the drive element 12 and ratchet mechanism 10 connected thereto, while the blocking action of this ratchet mechanism 10 in unwinding direction will be eliminated.

[0021] The leg rest 1 can further comprise various fastening provisions, such as an opening 24 and/or a cleat (as shown in Fig. 2) for fastening further cords, tensioning means or the like with which the leg P can be fixed on the supporting element 2 in a position for treatment.

[0022] The above-described leg rest 1 can be used as follows. An animal to be treated is positioned adjacent the leg rest 1, whereupon the cord 6 is unwound to such

an extent that it can be fastened around the leg P of the animal. To unwind the cord 6, the blocking means (the ratchet mechanism 10) are to be eliminated with the aid of the releasing means (coupling ring 10, coupling pin 20). To that end, the coupling pin 20 is pulled by hand in the direction of the arrow A, against the biasing force. As a result, also, the drive element (crank 12) is uncoupled, which is fixedly connected to the coupling ring 18. Hence, this crank 12 will not rotate along with the unwinding the cord 6 and the associated rotation of the spool 8. After the cord 6 has been unwound to a sufficient extent, the coupling pin 20 is let go of or unlocked, so that it is brought by the biasing means 23 in the coupled position in which the coupling ring 18, the ratchet mechanism 10 and the crank 12 are connected to the spool 8 in a manner secured against rotation. As a result, further unwinding of the cord 6 will be prevented by the ratchet mechanism 10, and a user has his hands free for fastening the cord 6 around the leg P of the animal. Then, the cord 6 can be wound by operating the crank 12, the leg P being pulled along by the cord 6 in the direction of the supporting element 2. The ratchet mechanism 10 prevents the cord 6 from being unwound due to any resisting forces of the animal. Thus, the cord 6 can be wound up until the leg P is located on the bearing face 4. Then, the leg P can be fixed in a desired position with further cords, tensioning means or the like that can be secured in the fastening means 24, 25. Thereupon, the leg P can be inspected and/or treated. Upon termination of the treatment, the blocking action of the ratchet mechanism 10 is eliminated in a manner described hereinabove, that is to say by pulling the coupling pin 20 by hand from the coupled position against the biasing force. As a result, also, the crank 12 will be uncoupled so that it will not rotate along with the spool 8. Instead thereof, the crank 12 is held in a position of rest by the pawl 15. In this manner, dangerous situations can be avoided as sudden jerks to the cord by the animal, and associated sudden rotation of the spool 8 cannot be transmitted to the crank 12.

[0023] The invention is not limited in any manner to the exemplary embodiments represented in the description and the drawing. All combinations of (parts of) embodiments described and/or shown are understood to fall within the inventive concept. Moreover, many variants thereon are possible within the framework of the invention as outlined by the claims.

[0024] For instance, the drive element and the blocking means can be coupled to the spool of the winch via separate coupling and/or releasing means, while the releasing means for uncoupling (eliminating) the blocking means can be operated or become accessible only after the drive element has been uncoupled. As a result of this too, the drive element is prevented from not being connected to the spool when this spool can unwind. Alternatively, the drive element can be fastened to the spool of the winch by means of a second ratchet mechanism, whereby, in a winding direction, the drive element is connected to the spool in a manner secured against rotation

and can rotate freely in opposite direction relative to the spool.

[0025] These and many variations are understood to fall within the framework of the invention as set forth in the following claims.

Claims

1. An apparatus (1) for supporting a leg (P) of an animal, comprising a supporting element (2) and a winch (5) for hoisting the respective leg (P) on the supporting element (2), the winch comprising a rotatable spool (8) provided with a drive element (12) for winding and unwinding an elongated element (6), blocking means for blocking the unwinding of the elongated element (6), releasing means for deactivating the blocking means (10) at least releasing the unwinding of the elongated element (6) and immobilizing means are provided for immobilizing, at least in an unwinding direction, the drive element (12) for as long as the blocking means (10) are deactivated, **characterized in that** the immobilizing means comprise a freewheel mechanism or ratchet mechanism which connects the drive element (12) to the spool (8) in a manner secured against rotation in the winding direction, and allows rotation in the unwinding direction, wherein the blocking means comprise a freewheel mechanism or ratchet mechanism allowing rotation of the spool in the winding direction but blocking it in the unwinding direction and wherein the blocking means (10) and the immobilizing means are connected via a common coupling part (18) to the spool (8), which coupling part (18) can be connected to the spool (8) by means of the releasing means, at wish in a manner secured against rotation or in a freely rotatable manner, wherein the releasing means are designed such that through deactivation of the blocking means (10), the immobilizing means are activated, so that the drive element (12) is immobilized.
2. An apparatus (1) according to claim 1, wherein the immobilizing means can be activated and deactivated.
3. An apparatus (1) according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the ratchet mechanism is provided with a wheel (14) with a toothed circumference and a pawl (15) which is arranged for movement into and out of the path of movement of the toothed circumference.
4. An apparatus (1) according to claim 3, wherein, with the aid of the releasing means, the wheel (14) can, at wish, be connected to the spool (8) in a manner secured against rotation or in a freely rotatable manner.

5. An apparatus (1) according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the coupling part comprises a coupling ring (18) which is provided around an end of the spool (8).
6. An apparatus (1) according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the releasing means comprise a coupling pin (20) which can be displaced between a coupled position in which the pin (20) extends into the coupling part (18) and the spool (8), and a releasing position in which the coupling part (18) can rotate freely relative to the spool (8).
7. An apparatus (1) according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the releasing means (20) are biased in a coupled position, in which position the blocking means (10) are activated.
8. An apparatus (1) according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein locking means are provided for fixing the releasing means (20) in a releasing position, in which position the blocking means are deactivated.
9. An apparatus (1) according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the elongated element (6) is provided with fastening means for fastening around a leg (P) to be supported.
10. An apparatus (1) for treatment of a four-legged animal, comprising a cage-shaped construction, designed for limiting the freedom of movement of an animal accommodated within this construction, wherein the apparatus comprises at least one supporting apparatus (1) according to any one of the preceding claims.

Patentansprüche

1. Vorrichtung (1) zum Abstützen eines Beins (P) eines Tieres, umfassend ein Abstützelement (2) und eine Winde (5) zum Aufziehen des jeweiligen Beins (P) auf das Abstützelement (2),
wobei die Winde umfasst
eine drehbare Spule (8), die mit einem Antriebselement (12) zum Aufwinden und Abwinden eines verlängerten Elements (6) versehen ist,
eine Blockiervorrichtung zum Blockieren des Abwickelns des verlängerten Elements (6),
eine Lösevorrichtung zum Deaktivieren der Blockiervorrichtung (10) zumindest beim Loslösen des Abwickelns des verlängerten Elements (6) und
wobei eine Ruhigstellvorrichtung vorgesehen ist, um zumindest in einer Abwickelrichtung das Antriebselement (10), solange die Blockiervorrichtung (10) deaktiviert ist, ruhig zu stellen,
dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Ruhigstellvor-

richtung einen Freilaufmechanismus oder einen Sperrklinkenmechanismus aufweist, der das Antriebselement (12) mit der Spule (8) auf eine Weise verbindet, die gegen Drehung in der Aufwickelrichtung gesichert ist und eine Drehung in der Abwickelrichtung gestattet,
wobei die Blockiervorrichtung einen Freilaufmechanismus oder einen Sperrklinkenmechanismus aufweist, der die Drehung der Spule in der Aufwickelrichtung gestattet, aber sie in der Abwickelrichtung blockiert, und
wobei die Blockiervorrichtung (10) und die Ruhigstellvorrichtung über ein gemeinsames Verbindungsteil (18) mit der Spule (8) verbunden sind,
wobei das Verbindungsteil (18) mit der Spule (8) mittels der Lösevorrichtung wahlweise auf eine Weise, die gegen eine Drehung gesichert ist, oder auf eine frei rotierbare Weise verbunden werden kann,
wobei die Lösevorrichtung so gestaltet ist, dass durch Deaktivierung der Blockiervorrichtung (10) die Ruhigstellvorrichtung aktiviert wird, sodass das Antriebselement (12) ruhig gestellt wird.

2. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, bei der die Ruhigstellvorrichtung aktiviert und deaktiviert werden kann.
3. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, bei der der Sperrklinkenmechanismus mit einem Rad (14) mit einem gezahnten Umfang und einer Sperrklinke (15), die angeordnet ist, um sich in und aus dem Pfad der Bewegung des gezahnten Umfangs zu bewegen, versehen ist.
4. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 3, bei der, mit der Hilfe der Lösevorrichtung, das Rad (14) wahlweise mit der Spule (8) auf eine Weise, die gegen Drehung gesichert ist, oder auf eine frei drehbare Weise verbunden werden kann.
5. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, bei der das Verbindungsteil einen Verbindungsring (18), der um ein Ende der Spule (8) vorgesehen ist, umfasst.
6. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, bei der die Lösevorrichtung einen Verbindungspin (20) umfasst, der zwischen einer verbundenen Position, in der sich der Pin in das Kupplungsteil (18) und die Spule (8) erstreckt, und einer Löseposition, in der sich der Verbindungsteil (18) relativ zu der Spule (8) frei drehen kann, versetzt werden kann.
7. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, bei der die Lösevorrichtung (20) in einer verbundenen Position, in der die Blockiervorrichtung (10) aktiviert ist, vorgespannt ist.

8. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, bei der eine Verriegelungsvorrichtung zum Befestigen der Lösevorrichtung in einer Löseposition, in der die Blockiervorrichtung deaktiviert ist, vorgesehen ist.
9. Vorrichtung nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, bei der das verlängerte Element (6) mit einer Befestigungsvorrichtung, um ein zu stützendes Bein (P) zu befestigen, versehen ist.
10. Vorrichtung zur Behandlung eines vierbeinigen Tieres, umfassend einen käfigförmigen Aufbau, der aufgebaut ist, um die Bewegungsfreiheit eines Tieres, das in diesem Aufbau untergebracht ist, einzuschränken, wobei die Vorrichtung zumindest eine Stützvorrichtung (1) gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche aufweist.

Revendications

1. Appareil (1) pour supporter une patte (P) d'un animal, comprenant un élément de support (2) et un treuil (5) pour soulever la patte (P) respective sur l'élément de support (2), le treuil comprenant une bobine rotatif (8) fournie avec un élément d'entraînement (12) pour enrouler et dérouler un élément allongé (6), des moyens de blocage pour empêcher le déroulage de l'élément allongé (6), des moyens de déblocage pour désactiver les moyens de blocage (10) au moins libérant le déroulage de l'élément allongé (6) et des moyens d'immobilisation sont fournis pour immobiliser, au moins dans le sens de déroulement, l'élément d'entraînement (12) tant que les moyens de blocage (10) sont désactivés, **caractérisé en ce que** les moyens d'immobilisation comprend un mécanisme de roue libre ou mécanisme d'encliquetage qui connecte l'élément d'entraînement (12) à la bobine (8) de manière à empêcher la rotation dans le sens d'enroulement, et permettre la rotation dans le sens de déroulement, dans lequel les moyens de blocage comprend un mécanisme de roue libre ou un mécanisme d'encliquetage permettant la rotation de la bobine dans le sens d'enroulement mais l'empêchant dans le sens de déroulement et dans lequel les moyens de blocage (10) et les moyens d'immobilisation sont connectés via une partie de couplage commun (18) à la bobine (8), laquelle partie de couplage (18) peut être connectée à la bobine (8) au moyen des moyens de déblocage, de façon à assurer, à volonté, le blocage en rotation ou la rotation libre, dans lequel les moyens de déblocage sont conçus tel que durant la désactivation des moyens de blocage (10), les moyens d'immobilisation sont activés de façon à ce que l'élément d'entraînement (12) soit immobilisé.

2. Appareil (1) selon la revendication 1, dans lequel les moyens d'immobilisation peuvent être activés ou désactivés.
3. Appareil (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel le mécanisme d'encliquetage est fourni avec une roue (14) ayant une circonférence dentée et un cliquet (15) qui est agencé pour se déplacer dans et en dehors du chemin de déplacement de la circonférence dentée.
4. Appareil (1) selon la revendication 3, dans lequel, avec l'aide des moyens de déblocage, la roue (14) peut, à volonté, être connectée avec la bobine (8) d'une façon bloquée en rotation ou de façon à tourner librement.
5. Appareil (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la partie de couplage comprend une bague de couplage (18) qui est prévue autour d'une extrémité de la bobine (8).
6. Appareil (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les moyens de déblocage comprend une goupille de couplage (20) qui peut se déplacer entre une position de couplage dans lequel la goupille (20) s'étend dans la partie de couplage (18) et la bobine (8), et une position de déblocage dans lequel la partie de couplage (18) peut tourner librement par rapport à la bobine (8).
7. Appareil (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les moyens de déblocage (20) sont sollicités dans une position de couplage, dans laquelle les moyens de blocage (10) sont activés.
8. Appareil (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel des moyens de verrouillage sont fournis pour fixer les moyens de déblocage (20) dans une position de déblocage, dans laquelle les moyens de blocage sont désactivés.
9. Appareil (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel l'élément allongé (6) est fourni avec des moyens d'attache pour s'attacher autour d'une patte (P) destinée à être supportée.
10. Appareil (1) pour traitement d'un animal à quatre pattes, comprenant une structure en forme de cage, destinée pour empêcher la liberté de mouvement d'un animal accueilli dans la structure, dans lequel l'appareil comprend au moins un appareil de support (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes.

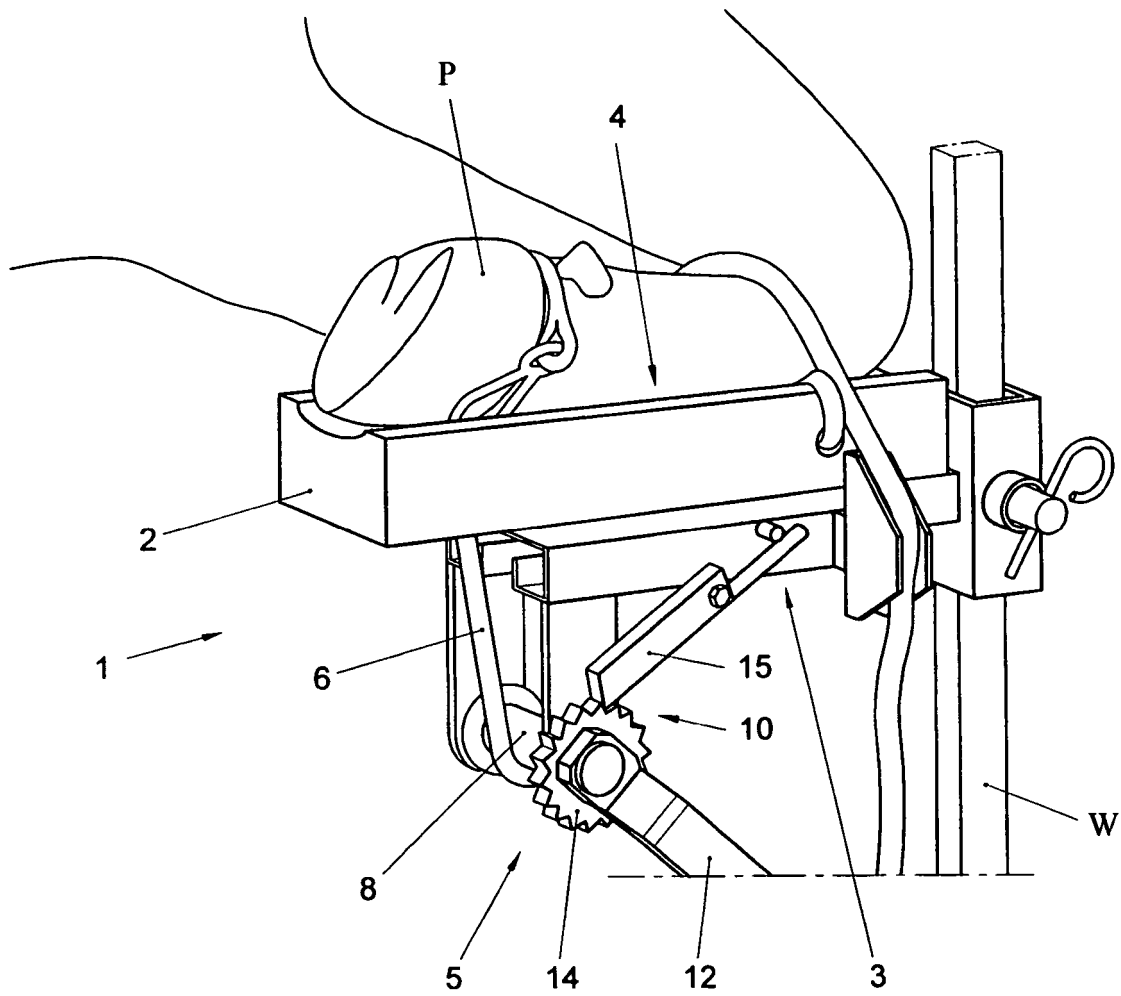


Fig. 1

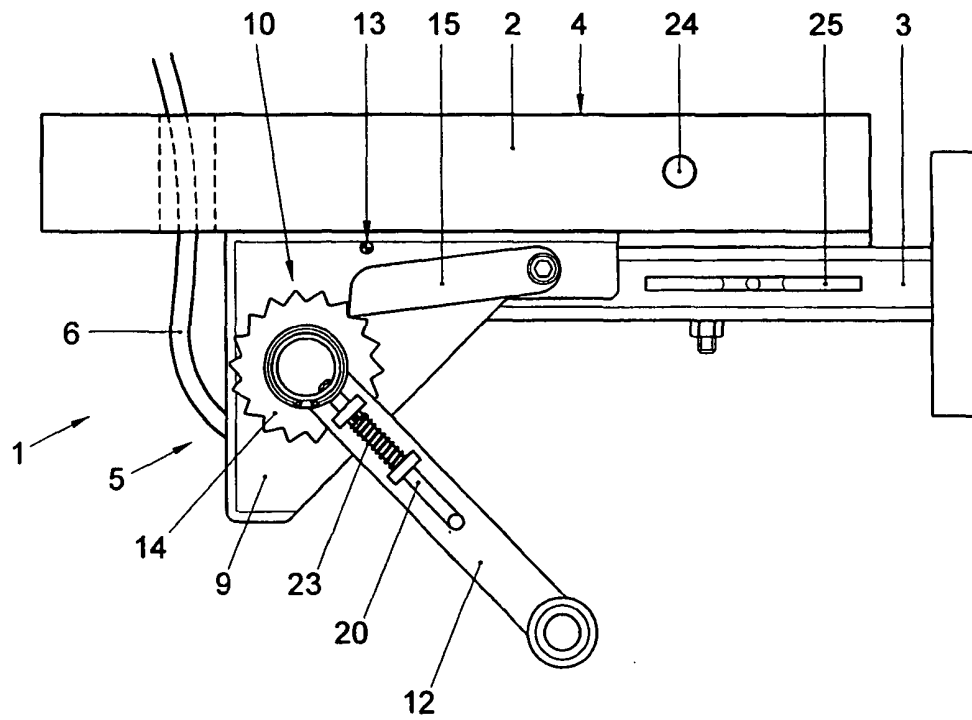


Fig. 2

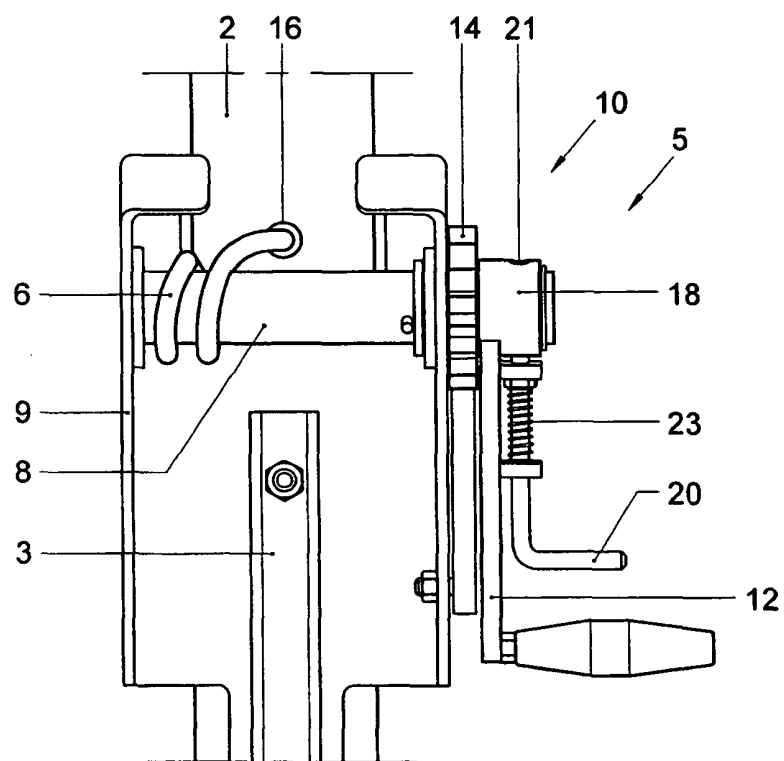


Fig. 3

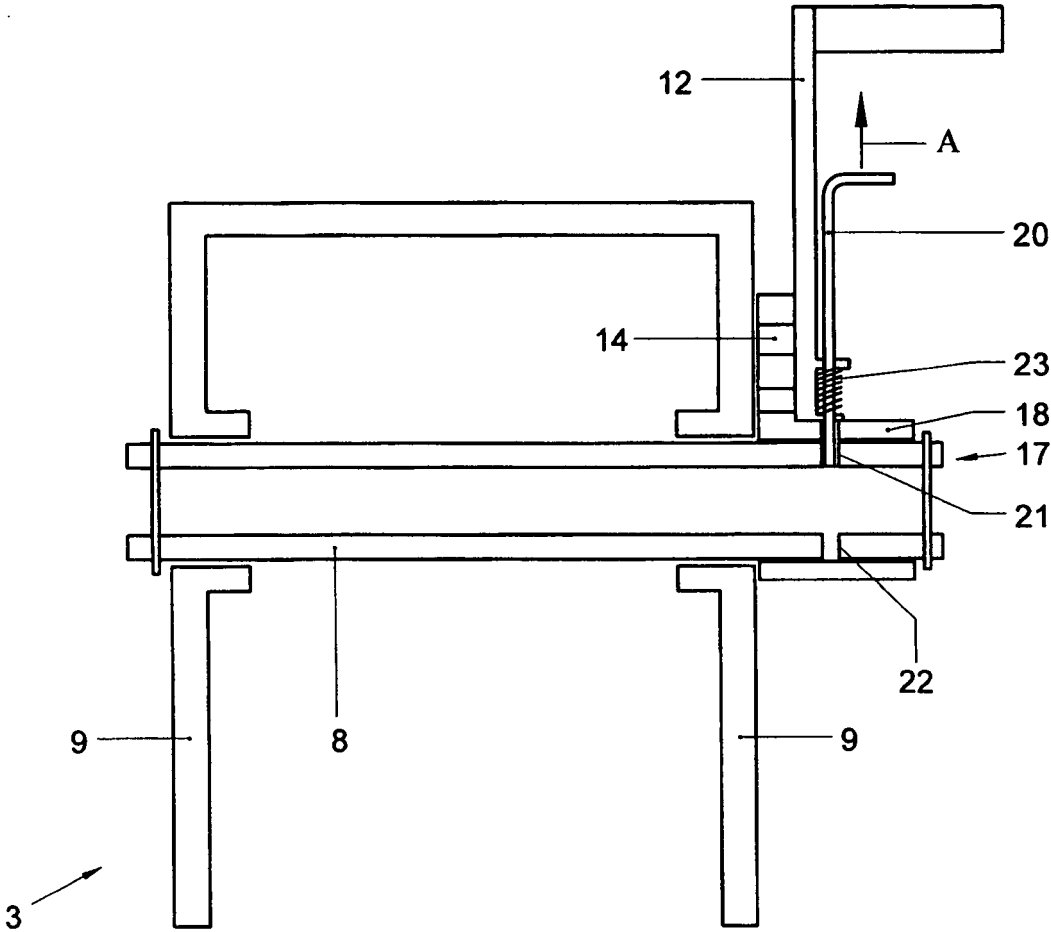


Fig. 4

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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