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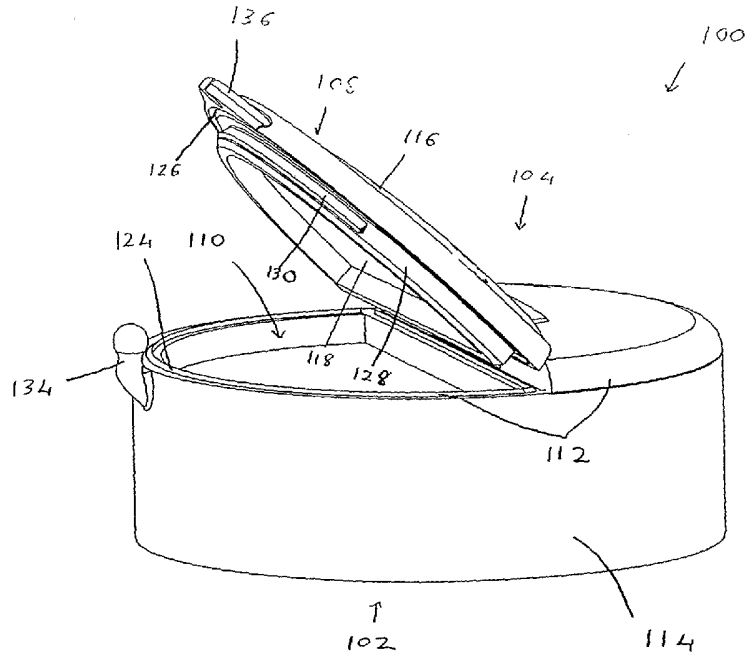
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(54) **Title:** SMOKELESS TOBACCO CONTAINER WITH IMPROVED COVER



(57) **Abstract:** The present disclosure relates to an improved replacement cover (199) for a conventional smokeless tobacco can (50) that may include a pivotably closable lid (108) and a method of mounting the cover (100) on a conventional smokeless tobacco can (50). The disclosure also relates to a smokeless tobacco holding device including a container and a lid with a spring-loaded hinge arrangement for opening the lid.

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SMOKELESS TOBACCO CONTAINER WITH IMPROVED COVER

Technical Field

The principles disclosed herein relate generally to replacing the lid of a conventional smokeless tobacco can with an improved cover.

Background

The widespread use of smokeless tobacco products has become prevalent around the world. Most smokeless tobacco products are sold in circular cardboard and metal or molded plastic cans having a paper seal enclosing them. This particular form of tobacco is normally referred to as snuff or finecut moist smokeless tobacco. When a user desires to use the product, the paper seal is broken, the lid is removed, and the desired amount of smokeless tobacco is removed from the can for enjoyment. The lid is then replaced until further use is desired.

Almost all commercially available smokeless tobacco cans, however, make using smokeless tobacco a cumbersome experience. The two-piece construction of almost all cans make opening of the lid, removal of a serving of chewing tobacco, and reclosing of the lid an at least two-handed proposition. Holding a conventional can and lid in one hand while trying to remove a serving of tobacco with the other can be cumbersome and lead to spilling of the product.

Furthermore, the inexpensive construction of the conventional smokeless tobacco cans and the repeated opening and closing of the conventional lids cause the lids to deform easily and become loose. Thus, once the paper seal is broken, the conventional cans and lids fail to provide the tight seal required to retain the flavor and freshness of the tobacco and are known to cause unwanted spills.

What is needed is an improved replacement cover for a conventional smokeless tobacco can that minimizes the above-mentioned shortcomings associated with conventional lids. What is needed is an improved cover that is easier to use and retains the integrity of the tobacco product longer by providing a better seal than conventional cans.

Summary

The present disclosure describes embodiments relating to an improved replacement cover for a conventional smokeless tobacco can that is easier to use and

provides a better seal than conventional lids and a method of mounting the improved cover on a smokeless tobacco can.

Another aspect of the present disclosure is directed to embodiments relating to a smokeless tobacco holding device including a container and a lid including a spring-loaded hinge arrangement for opening the lid, wherein the lid may form a snap-fit interlock with the container to provide a secure fit.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of the specification, illustrate various embodiments that examples of how certain inventions can be put into practice. A brief description of the drawings is as follows:

FIG. 1 is a front top perspective view of a cover having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the cover shown mounted on a smokeless tobacco can;

FIG. 2 is an exploded top perspective view of the cover and the smokeless tobacco can of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a front bottom perspective view of the cover of FIG. 1, a lid of the cover is shown in an open position;

FIG. 4 is a front top perspective view of the cover of FIG. 1, the lid of the cover is shown in an open position;

FIG. 5 is a top view of the cover of FIG. 1;

FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional view taken along section line 6-6 of FIG. 5, the cover shown mounted on a smokeless tobacco can;

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a cover having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure;

FIG. 8 is a perspective view of still another embodiment of a cover having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure; and

FIG. 9 is a cross-sectional view of a smokeless tobacco holding device having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present

disclosure, the cross-sectional view taken along a line similar to section line 6-6 of FIG. 5.

Detailed Description

FIGS. 1-6 illustrate a cover 100 having features that are examples of how various inventive concepts disclosed herein can be practiced.

In FIG. 1, the cover 100 is shown mounted on a conventional smokeless tobacco can 50.

Referring to FIG. 2, an exploded top perspective view of the cover 100 and the conventional smokeless tobacco can 50 is illustrated. The cover 100 is of a generally cylindrical shape and includes an open bottom end 102 and a partially openable top end 104. The top end 104 includes a solid portion 106 for mounting a lid 108 and a generally semicircular open portion 110 for accessing tobacco product 40 (illustrated in FIGS. 6 and 9). The top end 104 of the cover 100 defines a circular rim 112 that extends around the entire periphery of the top end 104 and a skirt 114 projecting downwardly from the rim 112.

The lid 108 of the cover 100 is depicted to include a generally semicircular shape to match the shape of the open portion 110 of the top end 104 of the cover 100. The lid 108 includes a top side 116 and a bottom side 118. The lid 108 is pivotably coupled to the solid portion 106 of the top end 104 via a spring-loaded hinge assembly 120, the details of which will be discussed further below. Although cover 100 is depicted with a "mid-hinge" lid arrangement, in certain embodiments, the lid may be provided at various other locations on the cover, as will be discussed below.

Still referring to FIG. 2, the conventional smokeless tobacco can 50 is illustrated with its conventional lid (not shown in the FIGS.) removed. The conventional smokeless tobacco can 50 generally includes a circular shape with a closed bottom end 52 and an open top end 54 that defines a top edge 56. A sidewall 58 is disposed between the bottom end 52 and the top end 54. The sidewall 58 includes inner and outer surfaces, 60, 62. Along with the two ends, the sidewall defines an inner cavity 64 for storing tobacco product. Generally, a conventional lid frictionally fits around the outer surface 62 of the can 50 for enclosing the can 50.

As depicted in FIG. 2, the cover 100 is mounted on the conventional smokeless tobacco can 50 from the top end 54 by sliding the skirt portion 114 of the cover 100 around the outer surface 62 of the sidewall 58 of the can 50. Once mounted on, the skirt 114 is frictionally held around the outer surface 62 and provides a tight fit with the can 50 for an improved seal. In a preferred embodiment, the skirt 114 of the cover 100 includes a resilient material. In one embodiment, the material could be Crayton 7705 polymer. In other embodiments, the skirt may be manufactured from other materials. The skirt 114 may be constructed such that the cover 100 can be repeatedly removed from and remounted to tobacco cans without being permanently deformed. In this manner, the cover may be made reusable.

Referring now to FIG. 3 illustrating the bottom perspective view of the cover 100, the rim 112 includes a flange portion 122 that protrudes radially inwardly. The flange 122 is configured to sit on the top edge 56 of the can 50 (see FIGS. 2 and 6) when the skirt 114 is slid over the outer surface 62. The flange 122 is generally of the same thickness as the top edge 56 of the can 50 and sits flush with the inner surface 60 of the sidewall 58 of the can when the cover 100 is mounted on. Along with the skirt 114, the flange 122 is adapted to provide an improved seal between the conventional tobacco can 50 and the cover 100 to preserve the freshness of the tobacco product 40 (see FIG. 6) inside the can 50.

Referring to FIGS. 4-6, whereas the skirt 114 may be constructed from a resilient material to provide reusability and durability, the rim portion 112 of the cover 100 may be constructed from a harder material to provide rigidity to the cover 100. In a preferred embodiment, the rim 112 is manufactured from a material containing 80% santoprene, 5% polypropylene and 15% fiber glass. In other embodiments, the rim may be manufactured from other materials. By being manufactured from a harder material, the rim 112 may be adapted to form a snap-fit interlock with the lid 108 of the cover 100, as will be discussed in further detail below. A snap-fit interlock between the lid 108 and the rim 112 assists in preventing unwanted opening of lid 108.

Referring to FIG. 4, the open portion 110 of the top end 104 of the cover 100 includes a raised portion 124 that extends around the periphery of the semi-circular open portion 110. The raised portion 124 is constructed to fit within a slot 126 defined at the bottom side 118 of the lid 108 that extends around the bottom

periphery of the lid 108 (also see FIG. 6). The raised portion 124 acts as an integral washer to improve the seal between the rim 112 and the lid 108.

Similar to the rim 112, the lid 108 is also preferably manufactured from a hard material to form a snap-fit interlock with the rim 112 to keep the lid 108 closed. In one embodiment, the lid 108 may be manufactured from Lexen polycarb LS 1111. In other embodiments, the lid may be manufactured from other materials. The lid 108 includes a downward extension 128 at the bottom side 118 extending around the bottom periphery of the lid 108. The downward extension 128 is shaped to fit in and seal the open portion 110 of the top end 104 of the cover 100. The downward extension 128 of the lid 108 includes a forwardly protruding tab 130 for retaining the lid 108 in a closed position once snapped shut. The tab 130 presses against the inwardly protruding portion 122 of the rim 112 to create a snap-fit interlock (see FIG. 6). The cover 100 also includes an external snap-fit assembly 132 to secure the lid 108 to the cover 100. The external snap-fit assembly 132 includes a knob 134 defined on the skirt 114 that interlocks with a receiver structure 136 defined on the lid 108. When the lid 108 is closed, the knob 134 is snapped into a c-shaped groove 138 defined on the receiver 136 to clamp the lid 108 shut. It will be understood that the depicted internal and external snap-fit arrangements are two of many different types of arrangements that can be used on the cover to create a snap-fit interlock to securely clamp the lid to the cover.

Referring back to FIG. 2, the lid 108 is pivotably coupled to the cover 100 via a spring-loaded hinge assembly 120. The hinge assembly 120 includes a lid hinge hole 140, two cover hinge holes 142, 144 (only the right cover hinge hole can be seen in the figures), a spring 146 that is received within the lid hinge hole 140, and a spacer 148 that couples the lid 108 to the solid portion 106 of the top end 104 of the cover 100.

The spring 146 includes a right end 150 and a left end 152 and is sized to fit within the lid hinge hole 140. The lid hinge hole 140 is not a throughhole and includes an open left end 154 and a closed right end 156. The closed right end 156 defines a slit 158 for mounting the right end 150 of the spring 146 (see FIG. 6). In the cross-sectional view illustrated in FIG. 6, the right end 150 of the spring 146 can be seen adjacent the slit 158 prior to being mounted within. The right end 150 of the spring 146 is inserted into the slit 158 to stationarily couple the spring 146 to the lid

108 such that the lid 108 and the spring 146 pivot together. The left end of the spring 152 is inserted into a slit 160 defined on a right end 162 of the spacer 148 to stationarily couple the spring 146 to the spacer 148. The spacer 148 is sized to fit within the lid hinge hole 140. A left end 164 of the spacer 148 is inserted into the left cover hinge hole 144. The left end 164 of the spacer 148 includes four arms 166 that elastically deflect radially inwardly to frictionally mount the spacer 148 to the left cover hinge hole 144. Once inserted, the spacer 148 is fixedly clamped to the solid portion 106 of the top end 104 of the cover 100. The spacer 148 stays fixed to the solid portion 106 of the cover 100 and does not pivot with the lid 108.

In a preferred embodiment, the spring 146 is inserted into the lid hinge hole 140 and mounted to the spacer 148 in a wound-up fashion such that, once the lid 108 is snapped-open, the spring 146 unwinds to automatically open the lid 108. In this manner, the lid 108 of the cover 100 can be opened with the same hand that is holding the container. Once snapped-open, the lid 108 rotates around the spacer 148 as the spring 146 unwinds. Lubricant such as viscous petroleum gel may also be used within the lid hinge hole 140 around the spacer 148 to slow down the pivot speed of the lid 108 relative to the cover 100. It will be appreciated that the depicted spring-loaded hinge arrangement 120 is only one of many possible coupling arrangements that can be used to couple the lid to the cover. Although the cover 100 is depicted to include a lid 108 that is pivotably coupled to the cover 100, there could be other embodiments where the lid is not pivotably or hingedly attached to the cover. For example, the lid 108 may be provided as a separate piece from the cover that forms a snap fit with the cover.

In general use, a user of smokeless tobacco may purchase a conventional smokeless tobacco can. The user may remove the lid provided on the conventional smokeless tobacco can and discard it. The user may then mount the cover 100 to the tobacco can by sliding the skirt portion 114 of the cover 100 over the outer surface 62 of the tobacco can until the flange portion 122 of the rim 112 rests against the top edge 56 of the can 50. When the tobacco product 40 is eventually exhausted, the cover 100 may be removed from the tobacco can and reused on a new can purchased by the user. The cover 100 may also be provided by smokeless tobacco manufacturers or distributors as a promotional item. For example, the lid 108, the skirt 114, or other portions of the cover 100 may be provided with insignia or

trademarks belonging to manufacturers and/or distributors of smokeless tobacco products for advertising and marketing purposes.

Referring to FIGS. 7 and 8, two alternative embodiments of a cover 200, 300 having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure are illustrated.

Cover 200 of FIG. 7 includes features similar to the cover 100 of FIGS. 1-6, except that a hinge arrangement 220 for the lid 208 is located adjacent the back side of the cover 200, rather than the "mid-hinge" arrangement provided for cover 100 of FIGS. 1-6. With this hinge arrangement, a larger open portion 210 at the top end 204 of the cover 200 may be provided.

Cover 300 of FIG. 8 includes features similar to covers 100 and 200 of FIGS. 1-7, except that a hinge arrangement 320 for the lid 308 is located outside the periphery of the rim 312 of the cover 300. The hinge arrangement 320 is depicted as being mounted to the skirt portion 314 of the cover 300 adjacent the back end.

As mentioned earlier, the two depicted alternative embodiments 200 and 300 provide two examples of the various locations and arrangements that can be used to couple the lid to the cover and there are certainly other arrangements possible.

Referring to FIG. 9, a cross-sectional view of a smokeless tobacco holding device 500 is illustrated. The smokeless tobacco holding device includes a container portion 450 and an integral cover portion 400 with a lid 408. The cover 400 of the smokeless tobacco holding device 500 is similar to the cover 100 illustrated in FIGS. 1-6, except that the cover 400 is provided as an integral part of the smokeless tobacco holding device 500, wherein the container portion 450 is integrally formed with a rim 412 of the cover 400. The cover portion 400 of the smokeless tobacco holding device 500 may include features similar to those specified with respect to the covers 100, 200 and 300 of FIGS. 1-8. Since the cover portion 400 of the tobacco holding device 500 does not include a separate skirt portion and is formed integrally with the container portion 450, the container portion and the cover portions of the tobacco holding device may be manufactured from materials of similar hardness. Although the smokeless tobacco holding device 500 is depicted in FIG. 9 to include a lid 408 with a spring-loaded hinge arrangement 420, there could be other embodiments, as discussed previously for the covers of FIGS. 1-8, where the lid may be provided as a separate piece from the cover portion.

It will be appreciated that many embodiments of the invention can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, and the broad scopes of the invention are not intended to be limited by the specific embodiments depicted and described herein.

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CLAIMS:

1. A method comprising the steps of:
providing a smokeless tobacco can including an outer surface;
providing a cover including a pivotably closable lid;
mounting the cover on the outer surface of the smokeless tobacco can.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the smokeless tobacco can includes a closed bottom end, an open top end, and a sidewall disposed between the bottom end and the top end, the sidewall including an inner surface and an outer surface, the top end defining a top edge, wherein the cover includes a rim and a skirt projecting downwardly from the rim, the skirt adapted to be mounted around the outer surface of the sidewall.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the skirt is adapted to be slidably mounted around the outer surface of the sidewall.

4. A method according to claim 2, wherein the skirt is made out of a more resilient material than the rim.

5. A method according to claim 2, wherein the lid forms a snap-fit arrangement with the rim.

6. A method according to claim 2, wherein the rim includes a portion adapted to sit on the top edge of the open top end of the can.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein the portion of the rim adapted to sit on the top edge of the can is adapted to sit flush with the inner surface of the sidewall of the can.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein the lid is coupled to the cover with a spring-loaded hinge arrangement.

9. A method according to claim 1, wherein, after being mounted, the cover is removable and remountable.

10. A method according to claim 1, wherein once mounted, the lid is openable and closable with one hand while holding the can with the same hand.

11. A method comprising the steps of:
providing a smokeless tobacco can containing smokeless tobacco;
removing a first lid from the smokeless tobacco can;
replacing the first lid with a cover including a pivotably closable second lid on the smokeless tobacco can.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein the smokeless tobacco can includes a closed bottom end, an open top end, and a sidewall disposed between the bottom end and the top end, the sidewall including an inner surface and an outer surface, the top end defining a top edge, wherein the cover includes a rim and a skirt projecting downwardly from the rim, the skirt adapted to be mounted around the outer surface of the sidewall.

13. A method according to claim 12, wherein the skirt is adapted to be slidably mounted around the outer surface of the sidewall.

14. A method according to claim 12, wherein the skirt is made out of a more resilient material than the rim.

15. A method according to claim 12, wherein the lid forms a snap-fit arrangement with the rim.

16. A method according to claim 12, wherein the rim includes a portion adapted to sit on the top edge of the open top end of the can.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein the portion of the rim adapted to sit on the top edge of the can is adapted to sit flush with the inner surface of the sidewall of the can.

18. A method according to claim 11, wherein the lid is coupled to the cover with a spring-loaded hinge arrangement.

19. A method according to claim 11, wherein, after being mounted, the cover is removable and remountable.

20. A method according to claim 11, wherein once mounted, the lid is openable and closable with one hand while holding the can with the same hand.

21. A method comprising the steps of:
providing a smokeless tobacco can including a bottom end, a top end defining a top edge, and an outer surface;
providing a cover including a skirt, a rim located at a top of the skirt, and a lid having a portion that fits within the rim;
mounting the skirt over the outer surface of the smokeless tobacco can, wherein the rim sits on the top edge of the top end of the smokeless tobacco can.

22. A method according to claim 21, wherein the lid forms a snap-fit arrangement with the rim.

23. A smokeless tobacco holding device comprising:
a container holding smokeless tobacco; and
a lid for opening and closing a top of the container,
wherein the lid includes a spring-loaded hinge arrangement for automatically opening the lid.

24. A smokeless tobacco holding device comprising:
a container holding smokeless tobacco, the container including a bottom end and a top end;
a rim located at the top end; and
a lid having a portion that fits inside the rim.

25. A smokeless tobacco holding device according to claim 24, wherein the lid forms a snap-fit arrangement with the rim.

26. A smokeless tobacco holding device comprising:
a container holding smokeless tobacco, the container including a snap-fitting lid, wherein the lid is openable and closable with one hand while holding the container with the same hand.

27. A smokeless tobacco holding device comprising:
a container holding smokeless tobacco, the container including a lid that forms a snap-fit interlock with the container, wherein the lid self-opens from a closed position to an open position without use of any hands once unlocked from the snap-fit interlock.

FIG. 1

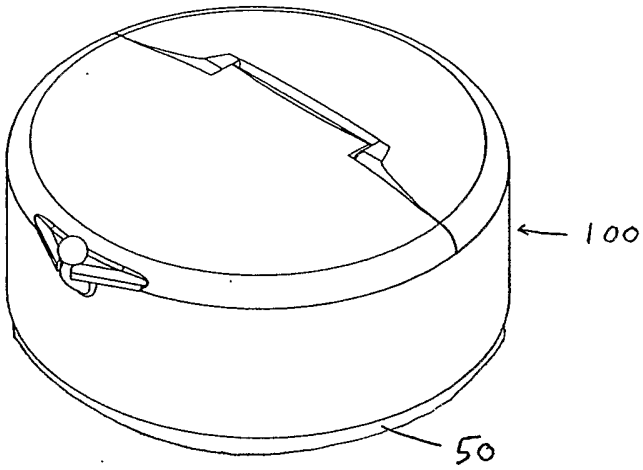


FIG. 2

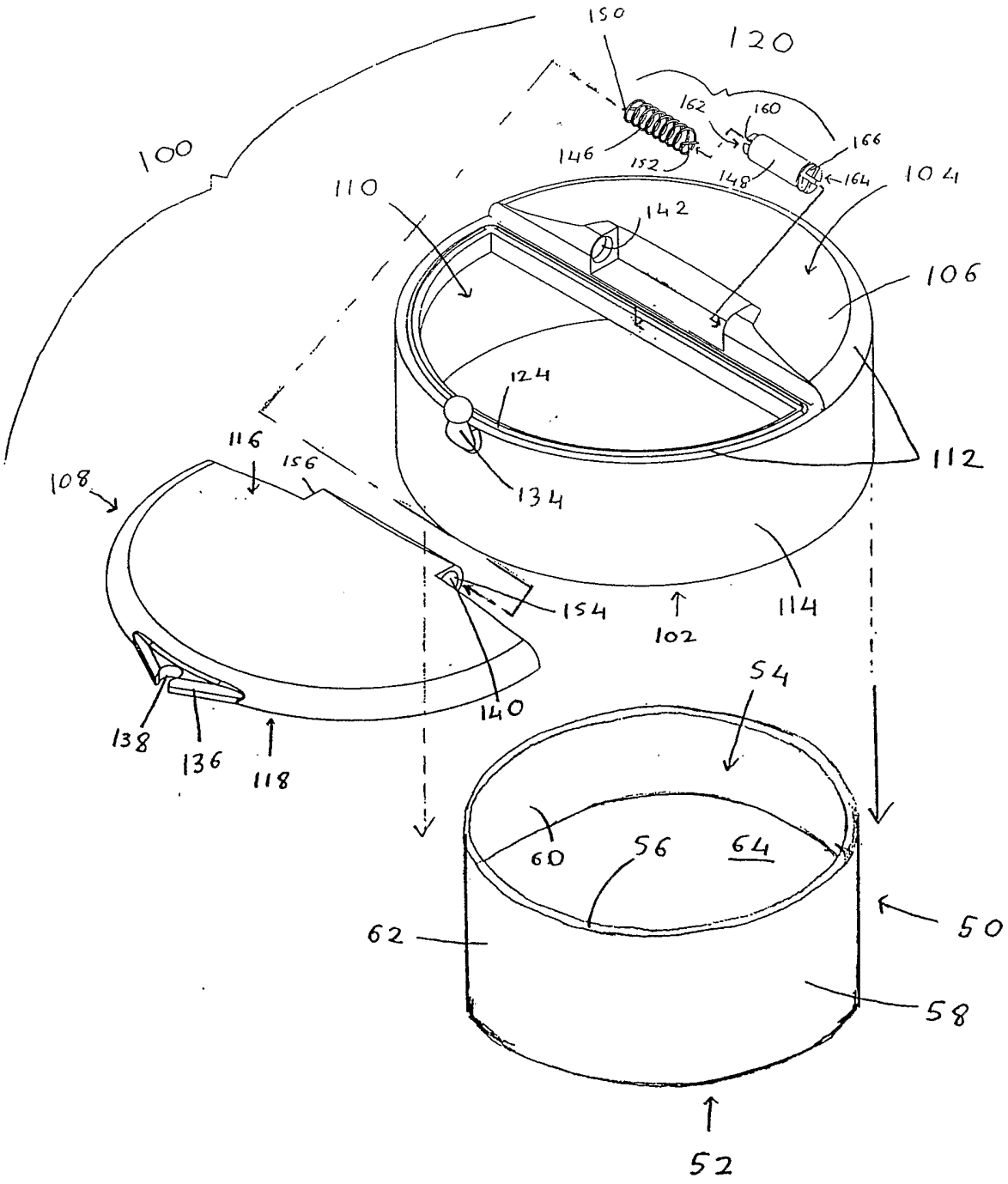

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FIG. 3

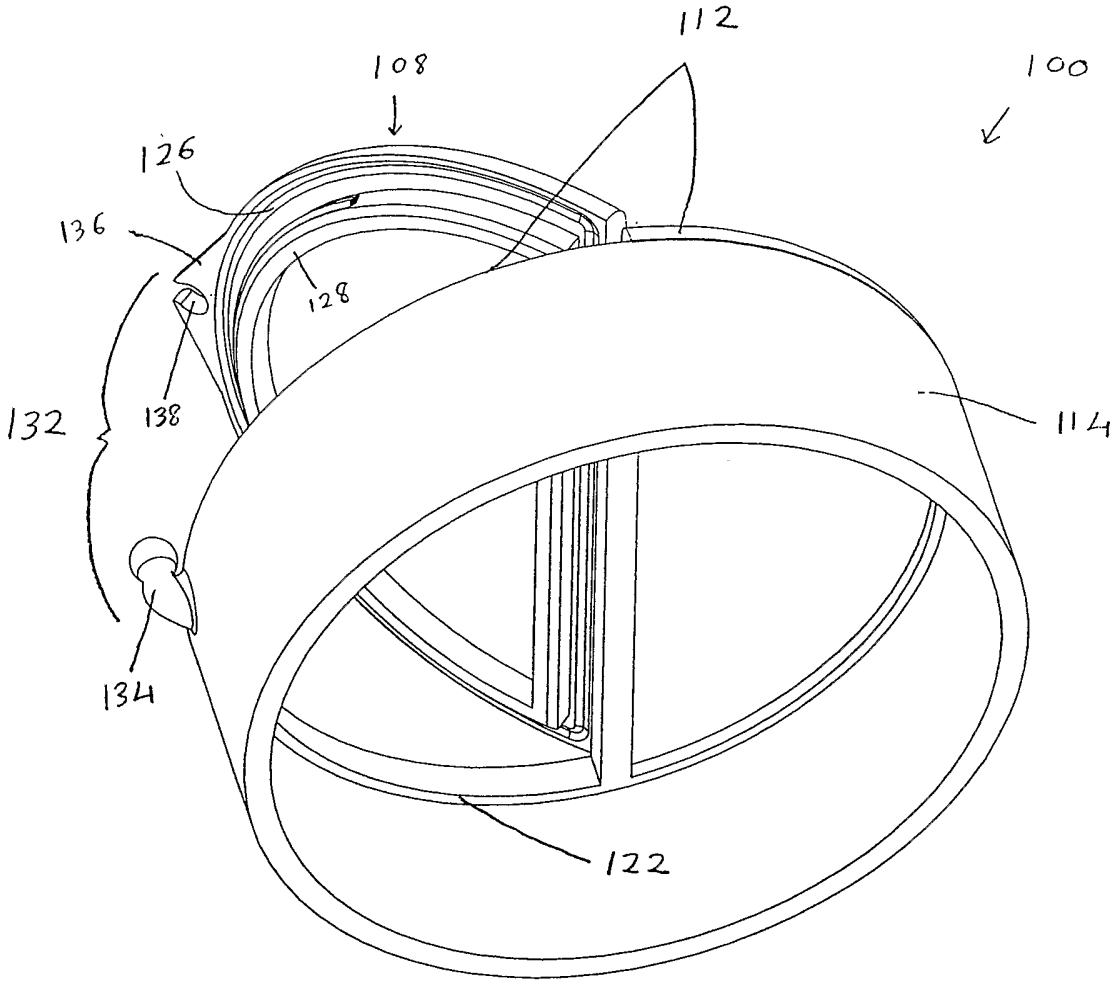


FIG. 4

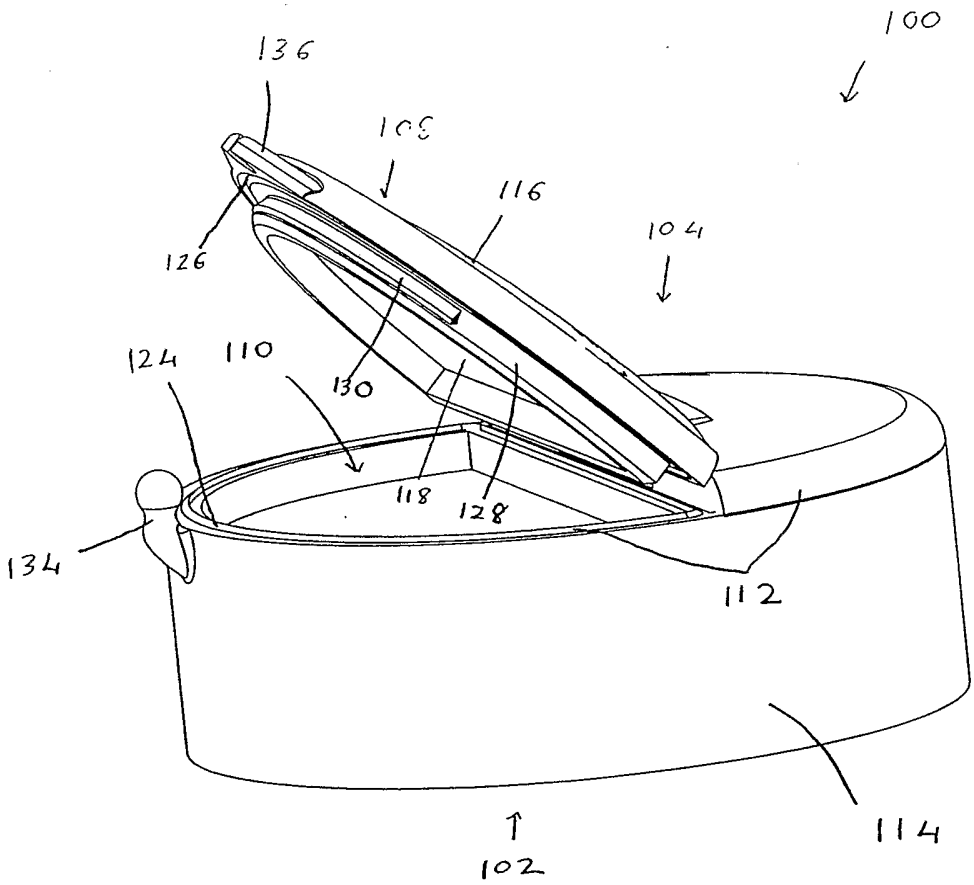


FIG. 5

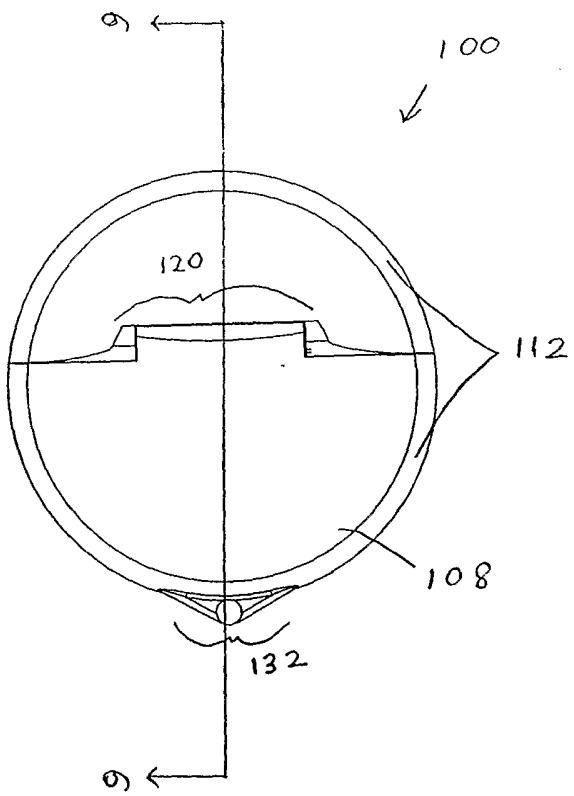


FIG. 6

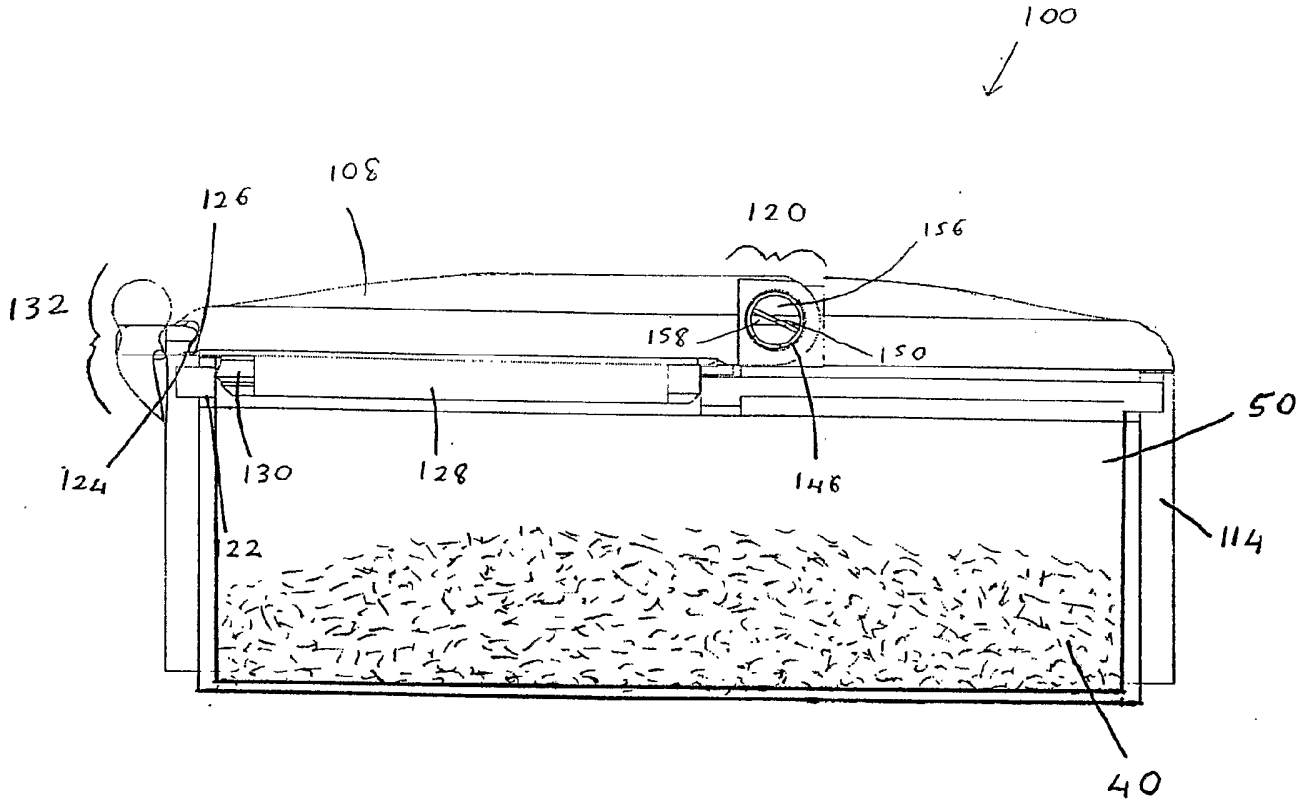


FIG. 7

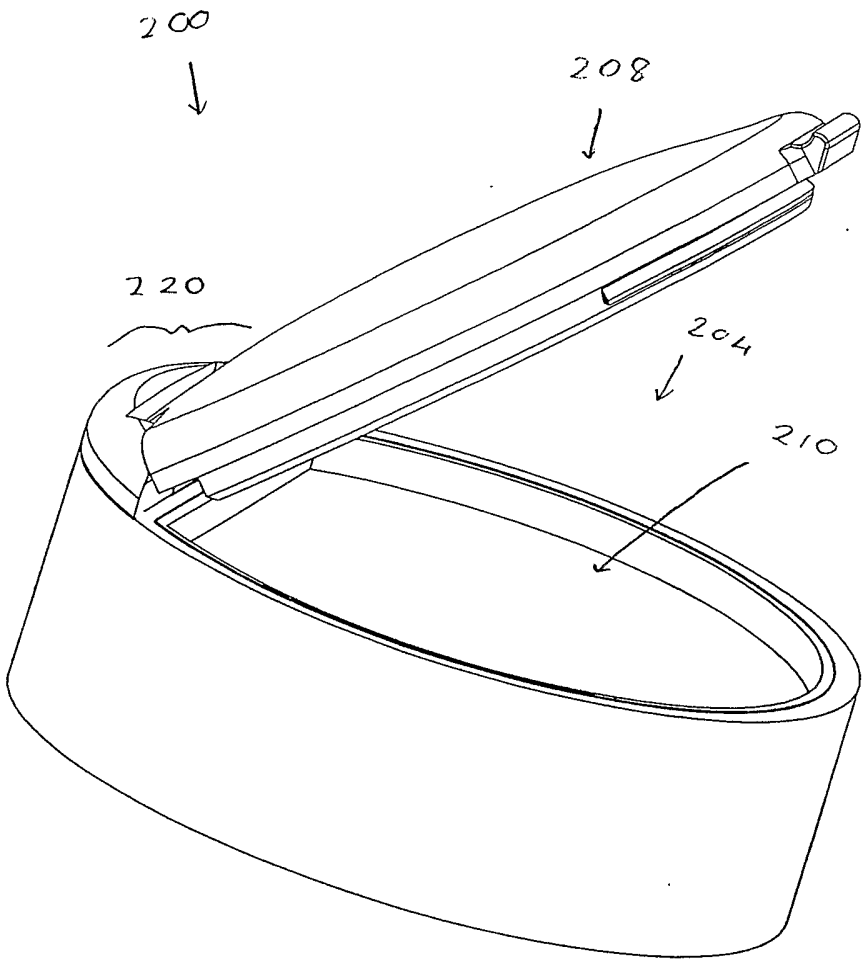


FIG. 8

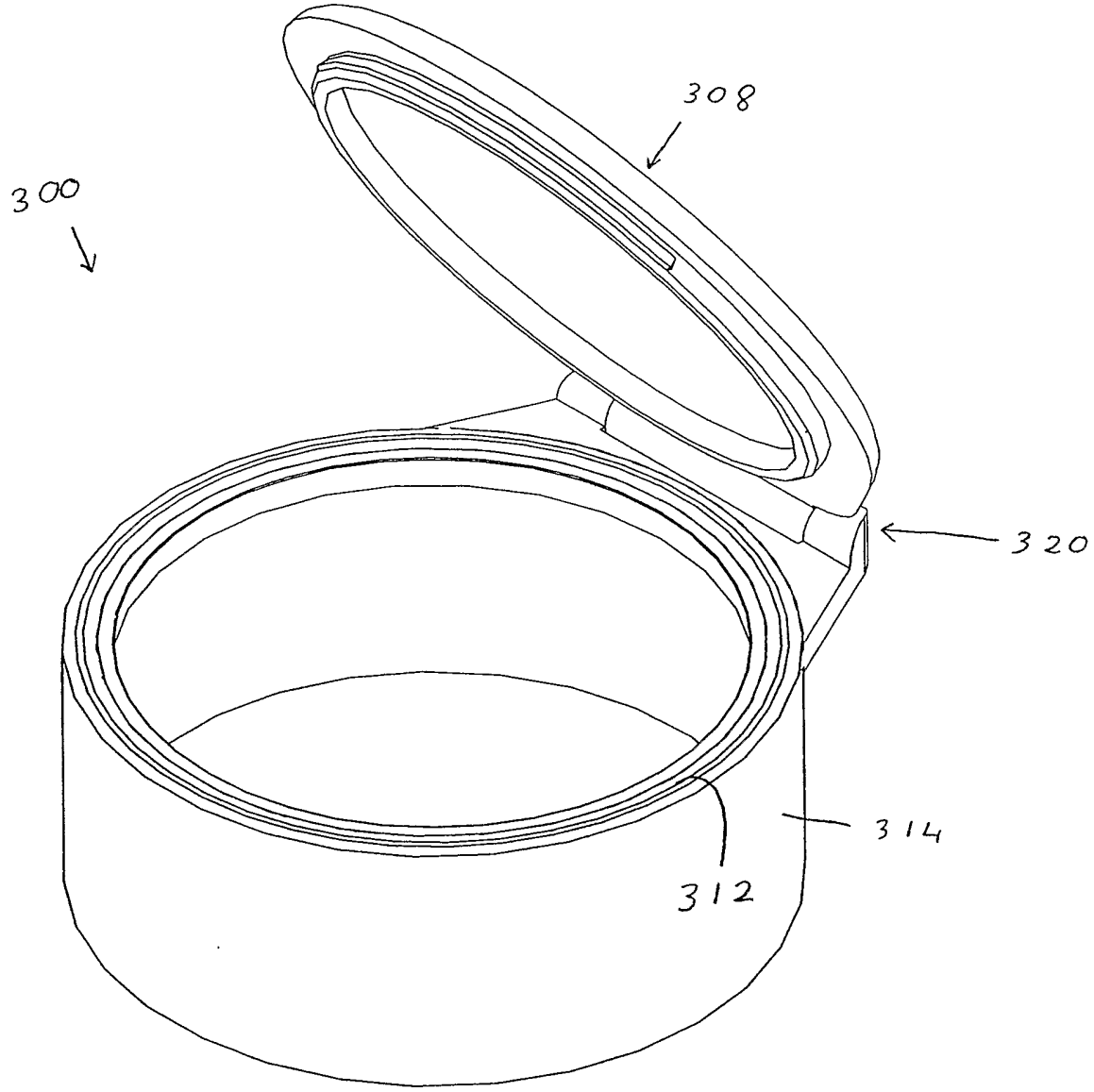
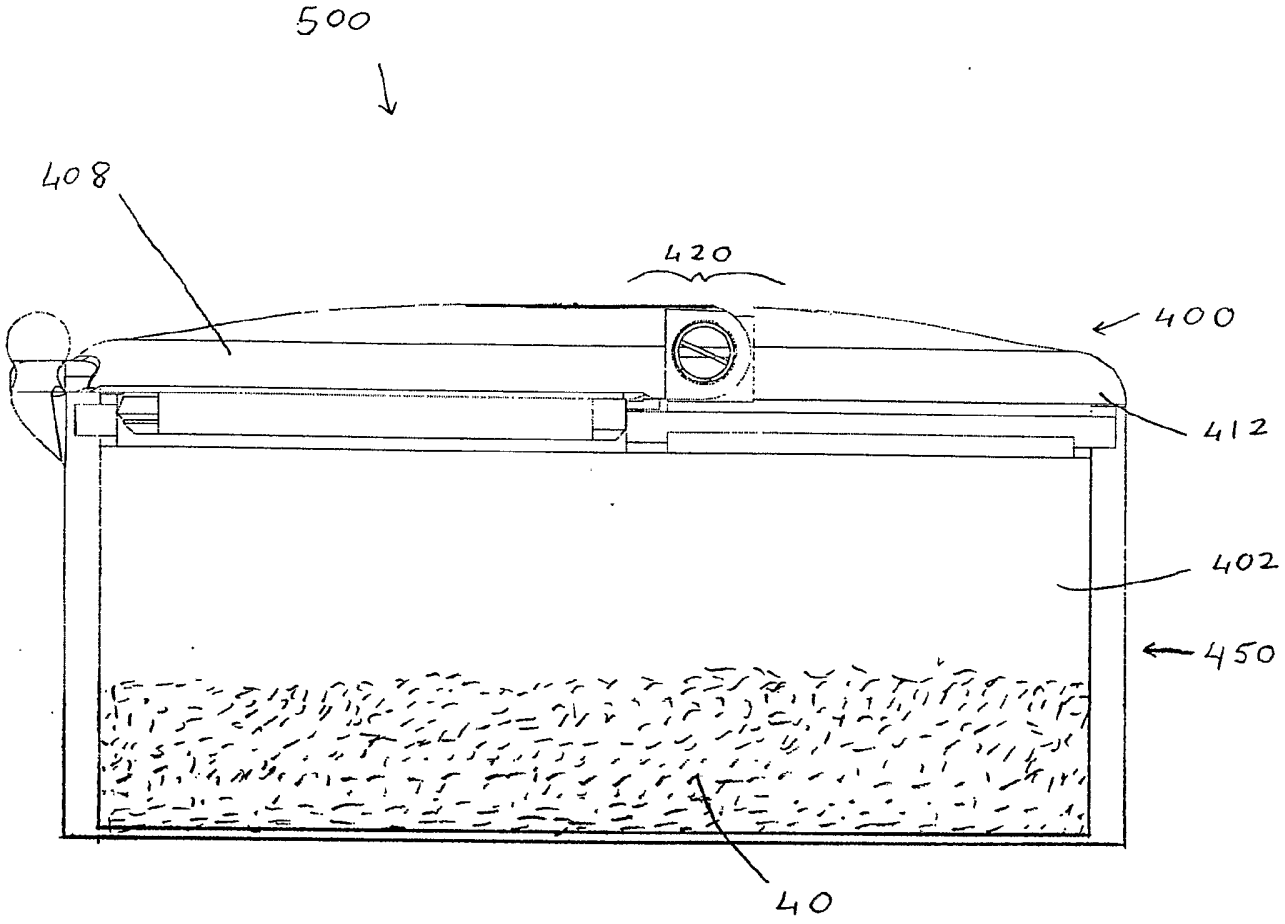


FIG. 9



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

US2005/034142

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
A24F23/00 B65D43/02 A45C11/20

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
A24F B65D A45C A45D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)
EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 4 513 877 A (TAGUCHI ET AL) 30 April 1985 (1985-04-30) the whole document	1-27
X	US 2003/218017 A1 (SCHMIDTNER ALOIS A ET AL) 27 November 2003 (2003-11-27) the whole document	1-27
X	US 2003/111359 A1 (SELIGA GORDON J ET AL) 19 June 2003 (2003-06-19)	1,24-27
A	the whole document	2-23
X	GB 03254 A A.D. 1911 (GEORG CROME-SCHWIENING; CARL ALBERT) 1 June 1911 (1911-06-01) the whole document	1-3,26

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[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

[X] Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
23 January 2006	31/01/2006

Name and mailing address of the ISA	Authorized officer
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US2005/034142

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	DE 298 07 072 U1 (FRIEDL, MANFRED, 87459 PFRONTEN, DE) 16 July 1998 (1998-07-16)	1
A	figures	2-27
X	US 2003/121803 A1 (BANKS KEEGRIA ET AL) 3 July 2003 (2003-07-03)	1
A	figures	2-27
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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