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(54) **INFLATABLE RIDE-ON TOY ANIMALS**

**Publication Classification**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

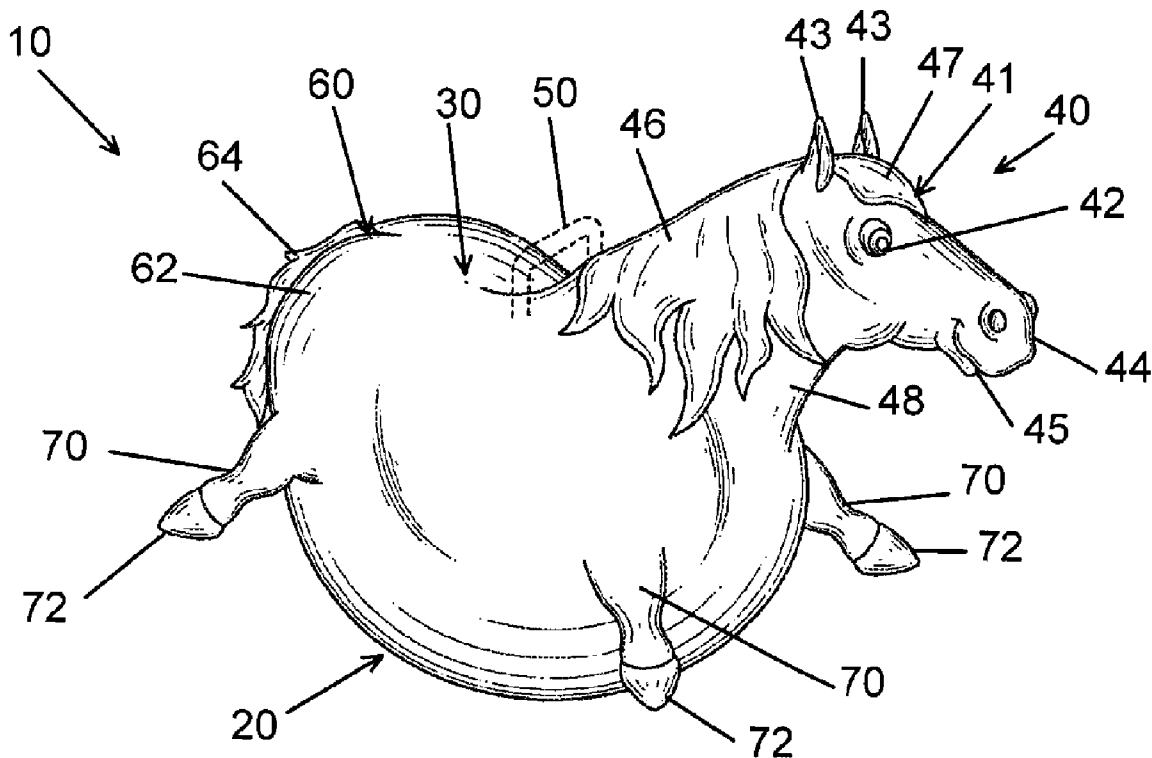
(21) Appl. No.: **10/907,800**

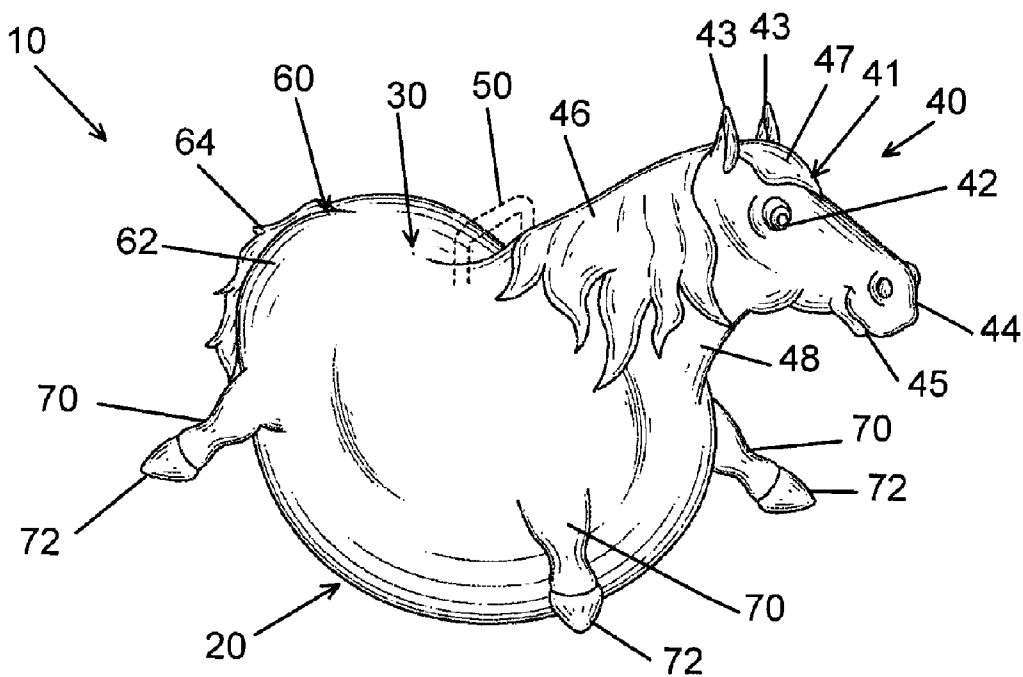
(22) Filed: **Apr. 15, 2005**

**Related U.S. Application Data**

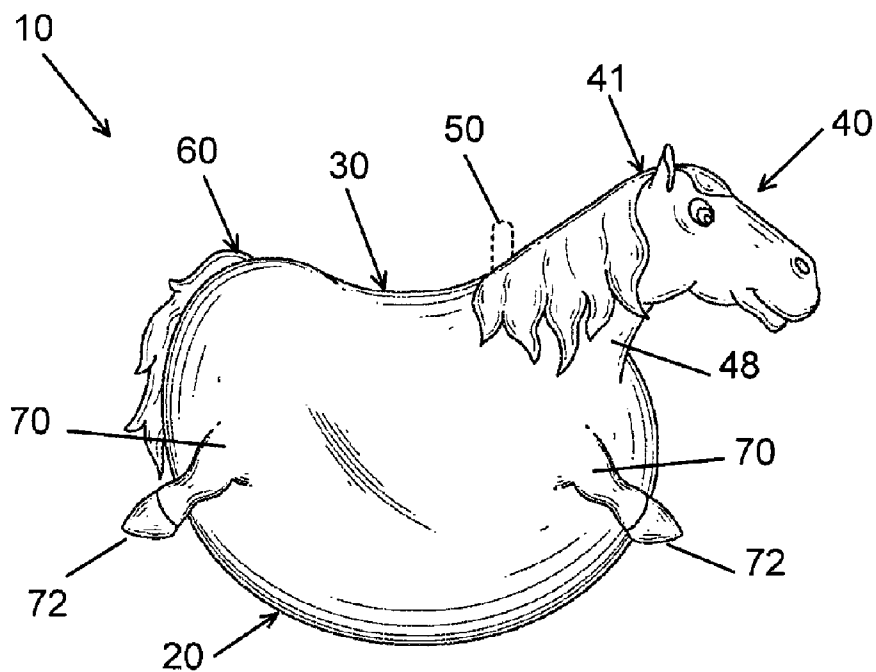
(60) Provisional application No. 60/562,970, filed on Apr. 16, 2004.

An animal-like inflatable toy figure comprising a hollow volume of air-impervious material shaped to form the body, head, fore and hind legs, and back. The body of the animal is comprised of a rotund belly that serves as the base of the toy and a back portion for receiving a rider. The ball shaped belly facilitates a bouncing and rocking motion, which allows the child to move around while riding on the back of the toy. The toy entertains the child while teaching balance as well as hand-eye coordination.

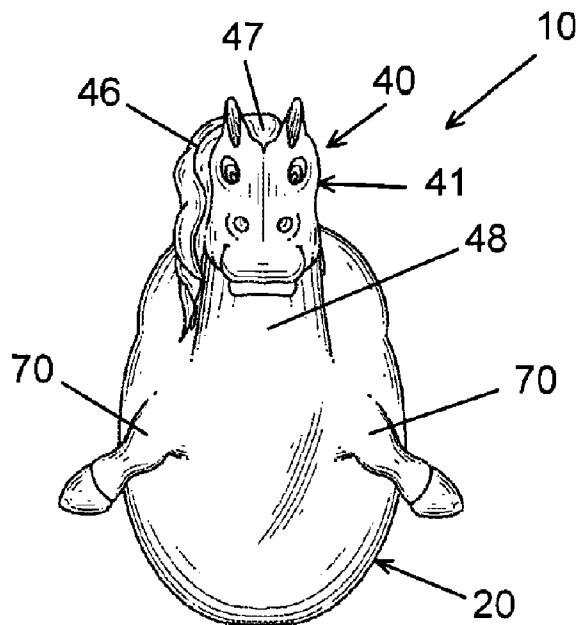




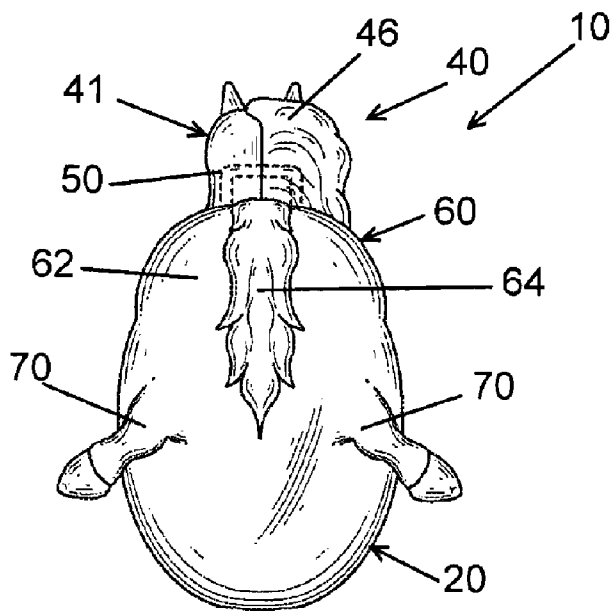
**FIG. 1**



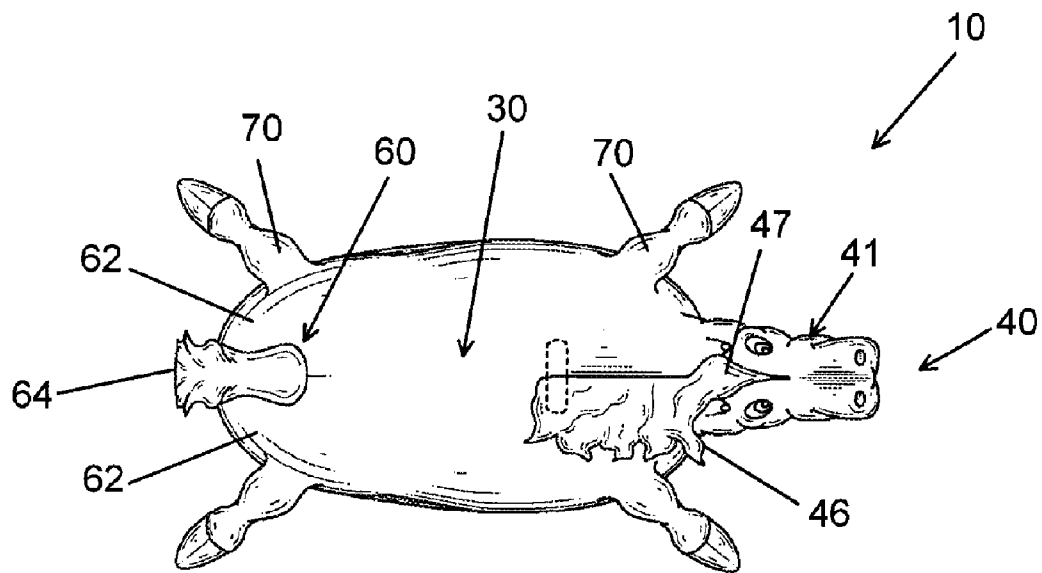
**FIG. 2**



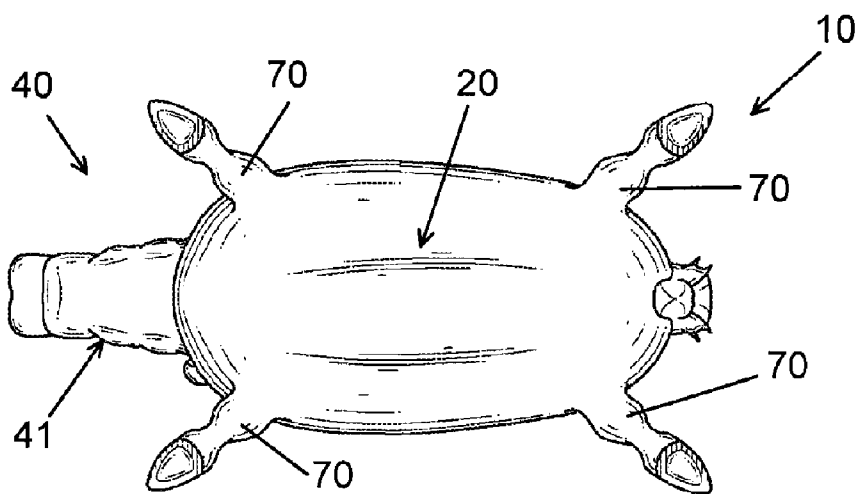
**FIG. 3**



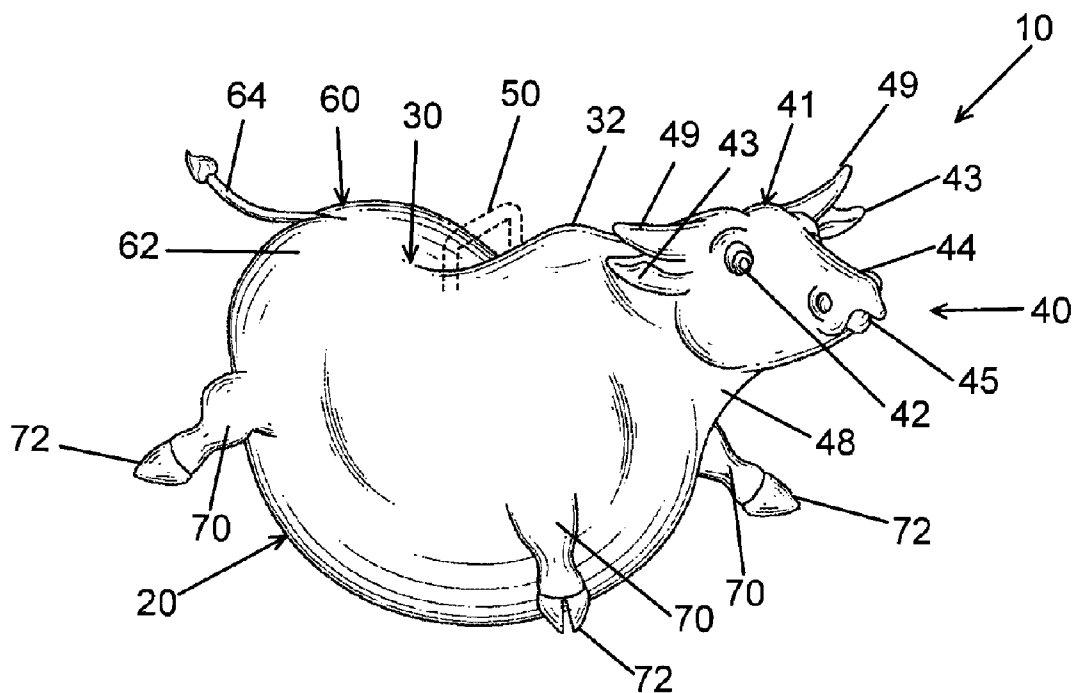
**FIG. 4**



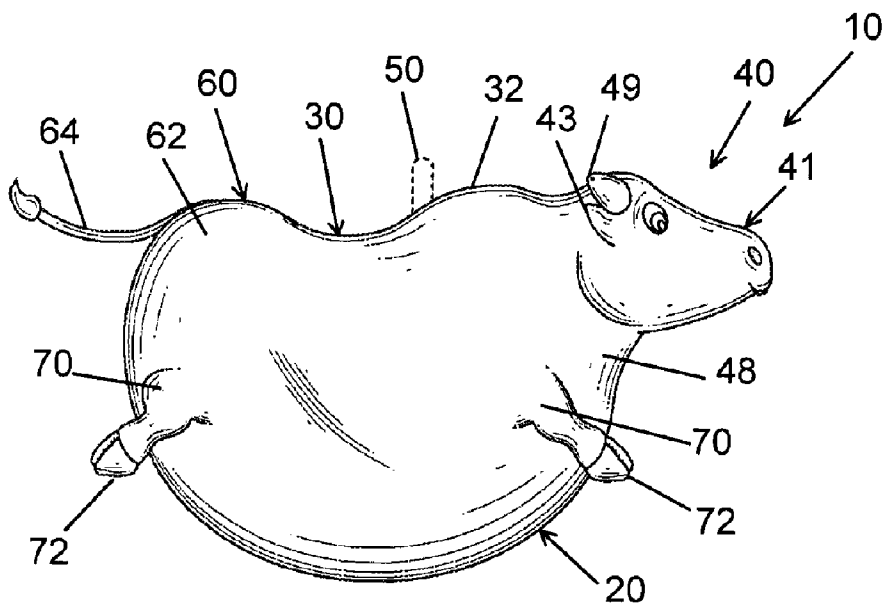
**FIG. 5**



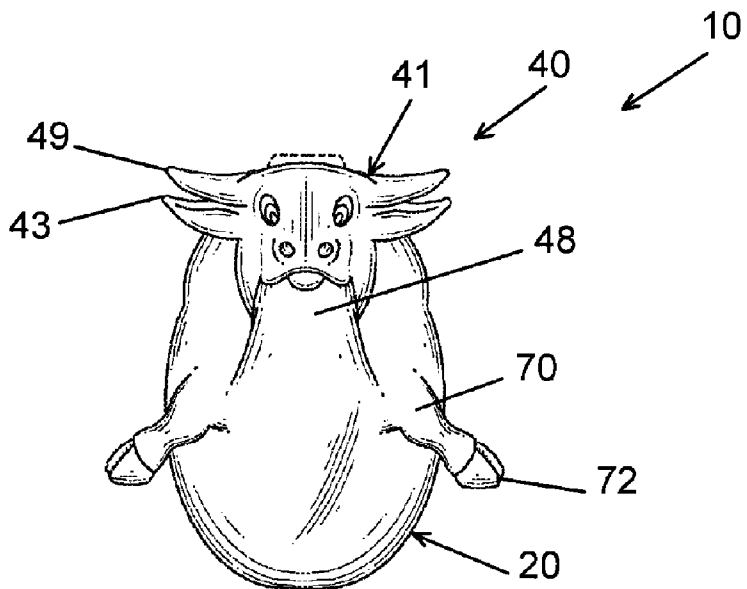
**FIG. 6**



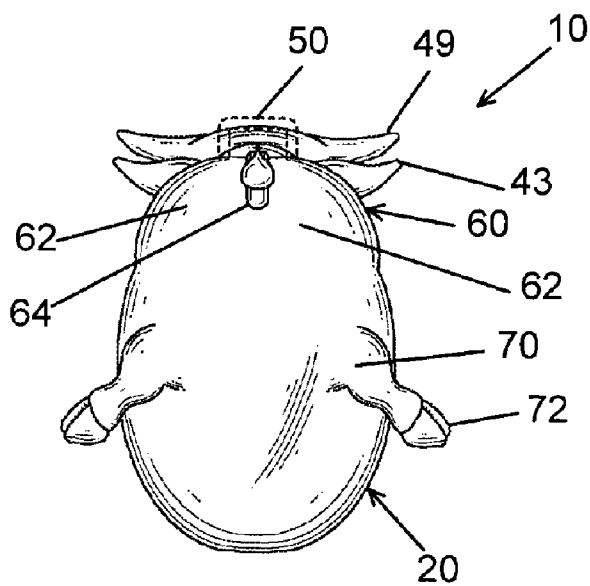
**FIG. 7**



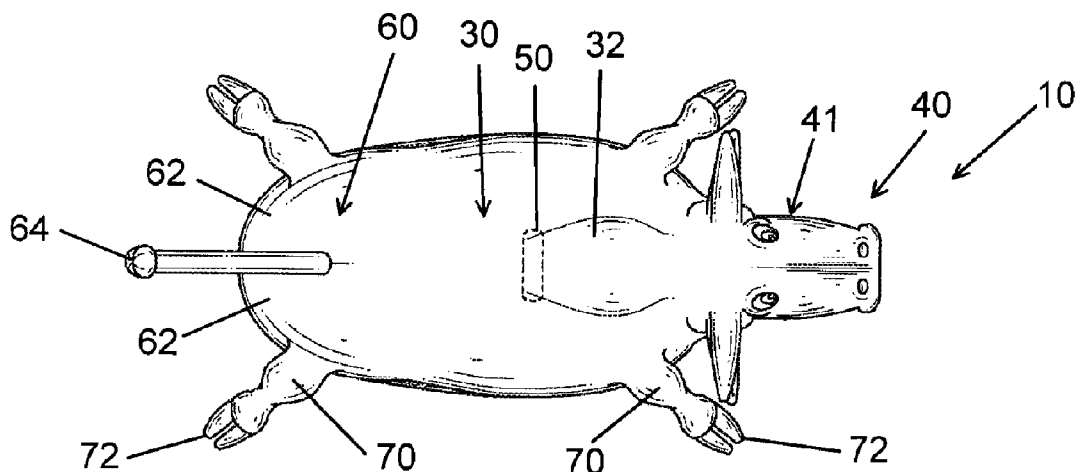
**FIG. 8**



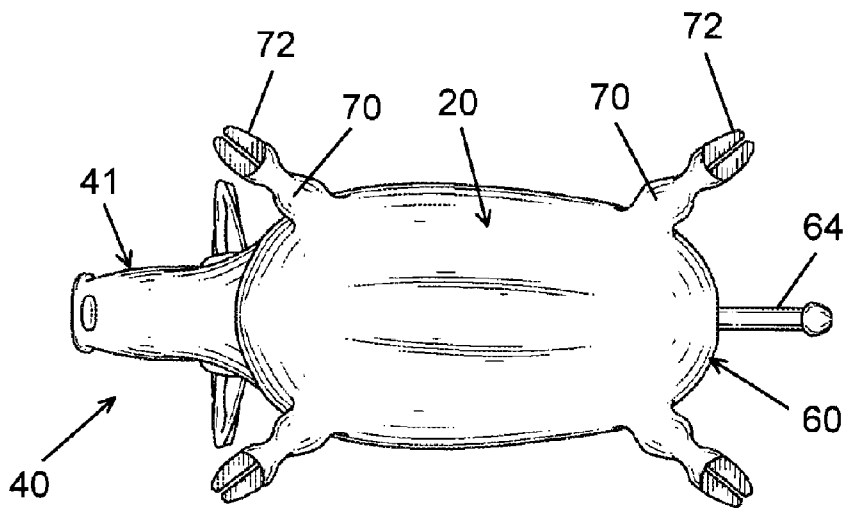
**FIG. 9**



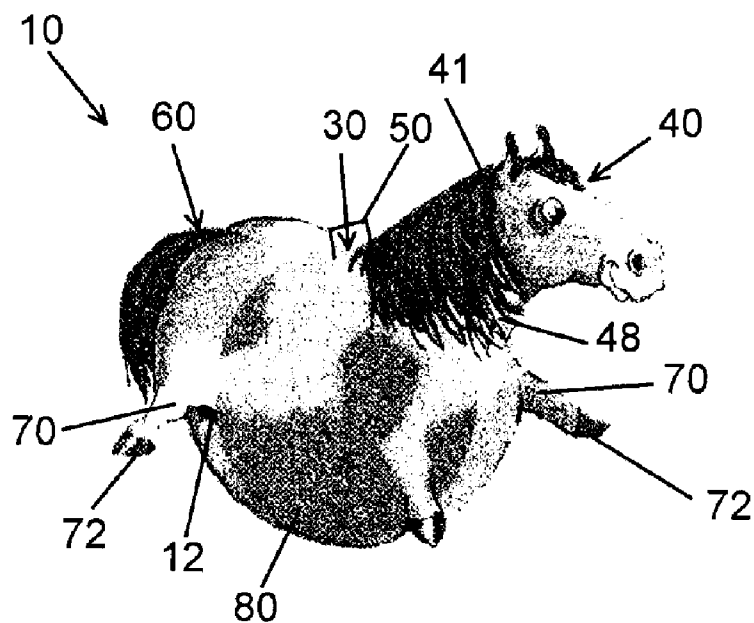
**FIG. 10**



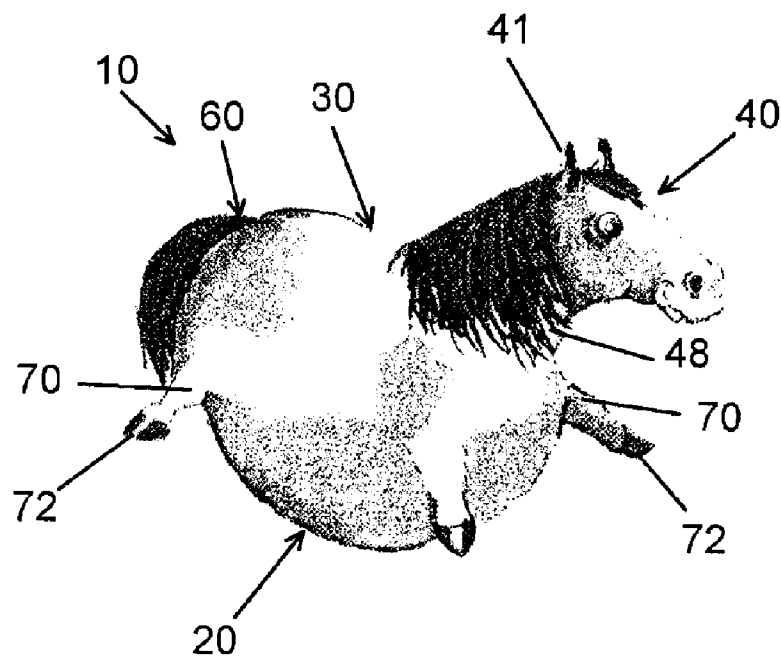
**FIG. 11**



**FIG. 12**

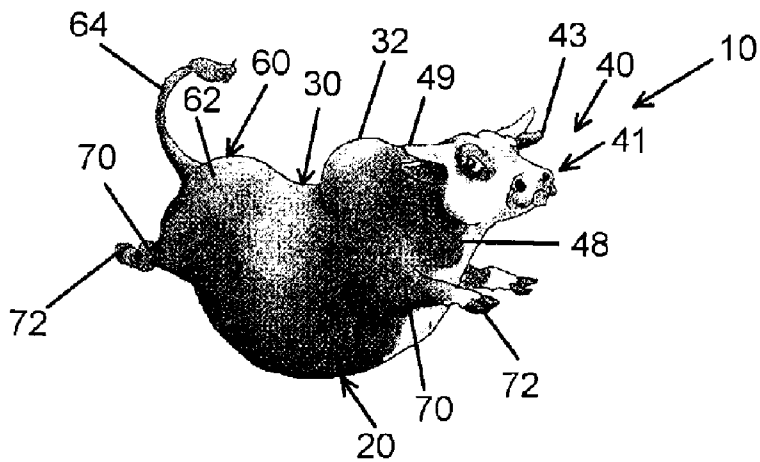


**FIG. 13**

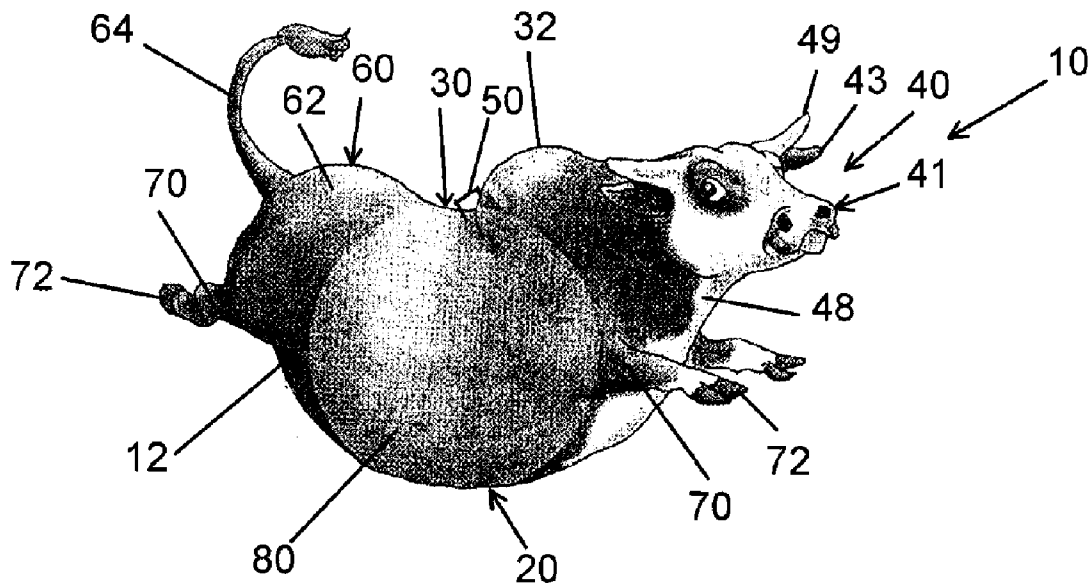


**FIG. 14**





**FIG. 15**



**FIG. 16**

### INFLATABLE RIDE-ON TOY ANIMALS

[0001] This application claims priority from provisional patent application Ser. No. 60/562,970, filed Apr. 16, 2004, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

#### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to air-inflatable toys. Specifically, it relates to a three-dimensional, inflatable toy that is shaped like an animal having a body portion with legs, a head portion, a rotund belly as its base and a handle, such that a child can sit on the inflatable animal's back and rock back and forth, bounce up and down, or translate by means of bouncing.

#### BACKGROUND

[0003] Inflatable plastic toys shaped like animals exist in the prior art. Most of the prior-art inflatable toys are small, hand held toys, which children can carry around. Larger, inflatable animal toys, some as big as children, have become popular as well. The prior art inflatable three-dimensional toys were usually used for posing, fantasy play, or for display purposes. There are also some stationary prior art inflatable toys that were designed to be sat on by children but not ridden (i.e. bounced or rocked by) by children. The present invention relates generally to an inflatable toy that children can ride, which allows the rider to rock or bounce the toy.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In one embodiment of the present invention, an inflatable toy animal that bounces and rocks at the direction of a mounted user comprises: a means for bouncing and rocking the toy, the means comprising a rotund base, wherein at least a portion of the base is inflatable; a seat portion extending from atop the base; a front portion extending from at least one of the base and the seat portion, the front portion including resembling an animal head; a plurality of legs extending from the base; a user grasp, the grasp comprising a handle, rope, bridle, rein, collar, ear, mane or hair; and an air valve.

[0005] In another embodiment of the present invention, an inflatable toy animal that bounces and rocks at the direction of a mounted user comprises: a means for bouncing and rocking the toy, the means comprising an animal-shaped body having a rotund base, wherein at least a portion of the base is inflatable; a means for sitting on the toy, the means comprising a seat portion of the body; a means for a mounted user to grasp the toy; and a means for inflating the toy, wherein the body includes a front portion that resembles an animal head and extends from at least one of the base and the seat portion.

[0006] In still another embodiment of the present invention, an inflatable toy animal kit comprises: an inflatable toy animal that bounces at the direction of a mounted user comprising: a means for bouncing the toy, the means comprising a rotund base, wherein at least a portion of the base is inflatable; a seat portion extending from atop the base; a front portion extending from at least one of the base and the seat portion, the front portion resembling an animal head; a plurality of legs extending from the base; a user grasp, the grasp comprising a handle, rope, bridle, rein, collar, ear, mane or hair; and an air valve; and at least one accessory selected from the following list: a hair brush; a hair braid; a hair clip; a hat; a saddle; a rug; a blanket; a body cover; a leg

wrap or cover; a pair of stirrups; shoes; gloves; a saddle pack; a halter; a bridle; a rein; a bit; blinders; a hat; a beret; a head band; a scarf; a collar; a rope; a costume; or armor.

#### DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the air-inflatable toy animal, depicting a horse, of the present invention;

[0008] FIG. 2 is a side view of the inflatable toy horse of FIG. 1;

[0009] FIG. 3 is a front view of the inflatable toy horse of FIG. 1;

[0010] FIG. 4 is a rear view of the inflatable toy horse of FIG. 1;

[0011] FIG. 5 is a top view of the inflatable toy horse of FIG. 1;

[0012] FIG. 6 is a bottom view of the inflatable toy horse of FIG. 1;

[0013] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of the air-inflatable toy animal, depicting a bull, of the present invention;

[0014] FIG. 8 is a side view of the inflatable toy bull of FIG. 7;

[0015] FIG. 9 is a front view of the inflatable toy bull of FIG. 7;

[0016] FIG. 10 is a rear view of the inflatable toy bull of FIG. 7;

[0017] FIG. 11 is a top view of the inflatable toy bull of FIG. 7;

[0018] FIG. 12 is a bottom view of the inflatable toy bull of FIG. 7;

[0019] FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the inflatable toy horse of FIG. 1 showing an internal compartment;

[0020] FIG. 14 is a perspective view of the inflatable toy horse of FIG. 1 showing an air valve;

[0021] FIG. 15 is a perspective view of the inflatable toy bull of FIG. 7 showing an air valve; and

[0022] FIG. 16 is a perspective view of the inflatable toy bull of FIG. 7 showing an internal compartment.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0023] FIGS. 1-16 show an inflatable toy animal 10 that has a rotund or rounded base 20, which resembles a portion of a ball, with the remaining portions of the toy shaped to resemble an animal, such as, for example, a horse in FIGS. 1-6, 13-14 and a bull in FIGS. 7-12, 15-16. At least a portion of toy 10 is inflated with pressurized air (other gases or liquid may be used), facilitating the use thereof for rocking (rotating), bouncing, or translating activities. Toy 10 may be designed to have a realistic look to aid children in imagining that they are riding a real animal. The animal may be a non-fictional animal included within the kingdom Animalia (which includes insects). For example, the toy 10 may comprise a horse, bull, dog, cat, ant, or grasshopper. The animal may also be a fictional animal, such as, for example, a dragon or unicorn. It is also contemplated that the toy 10 can be designed to resemble any other animate or inanimate object.

[0024] The toy 10 generally comprises a base 20, a seat or mounted portion 30, a front end portion 40, and a grasping

portion **50**. The toy **10** may also comprise a rear end portion **60**, legs **70**, and an internal chamber or compartment **80**. In the present embodiment, a plug and stopper (or air valve) **12** is used to facilitate inflation and containment of the pressurized air within toy **10**. Valve **12** may be located anywhere on toy **10**, and may be tucked or collapsed into toy **10**, to deter any accidental contact or opening of valve **12**. It is contemplated that valve may comprise any commercially known inflation and containment means, including, for example, rubber, polymeric, or metal valves. Depending on the type of valve (inflation and containment means) used, valve **12** may be integral (maintained in a fixed relationship as a single unit) or monolithic (forming as a single uniform structure) with toy **10** or operably attached to toy **10**, each using any commercially known means, such as by molding, adhesive bonding, stitching and sealing, or heat bonding.

[0025] Toy **10** may be integrally formed (where all parts are maintained in a fixed relationship as a single unit), monolithically formed (as a single uniform structure), or it may operably formed, each using any commercially known means, such as, for example, any molding process (including injection molding), adhesive bonding, stitching and sealing, or heat-bonding. Toy **10** should be sufficiently strong to support the weight of a user, such as a child or adult, without collapsing, bursting, or separating. This will largely be a function of: the intended user (child or adult); type of material used to manufacture the toy **10**; whether toy **10** is integral, monolithic, or operably formed and the specific forming process used; and the size and shape of base **20**. Also, the material must be reasonably impervious to air leaks and seepage.

[0026] Toy **10** can be made from any commercially known material that provides an inflatable structure that can be bounced, especially polymeric or elastic materials, such as natural rubber, latex rubber, non-latex rubber, nitrile-butadiene or acrylonitrile-butadiene rubber (NBR), or an NBR/polyvinyl chloride (PVC) blend. Certain materials, such as non-latex rubber, may be used to provide a hypoallergenic toy **10**. Toy **10** may be homogenous or heterogeneous (whether or not integrally, monolithically, or operably formed), where at least a portion of toy **10** is formed from the materials mentioned above; however, certain portions of toy **10** may be formed from other materials, such as, for example, wood, synthetic hair, or metal.

[0027] Base **20** is the lower portion of the toy **10**, the portion that contacts the ground or water and generally forms the belly of the animal; however, it is contemplated that toy **10** may depict an animal in any position, such as, for example, on its back or on its buttocks. Therefore, in the first example, base **20** would represent the animal's back, and not its belly. Generally, at least a portion of base **20** is inflated with pressurized air. The rotund or rounded shape of base **20** contributes to the ability of toy **10** to rock back and forth. As the user shifts his or her weight forward, toy **10** rolls upon the front portion of base **20**, which then deforms. The same happens to the rear portion of base **20** when the user shifts his or her weight backward. Further, because at least a portion of base **20** is inflated and pressurized to form a tensile structure, it deforms under load and facilitates bouncing and translation of toy **10**. As base **20** deflects under load, a substantially flat contact patch forms where base **20** contacts the ground. Together, the inflated tensile structure and the contact patch provide stability to a user during rocking, bouncing, or translation activities. It is contemplated that base **20** may include a sphere-like internal

chamber or compartment **80**, which is inflated with pressurized air and performs similar to base **20** as described above. Internal chamber **80** may comprise a separate structure that is operably attached to the body, such as along the base, or it may comprise a portion of base **20**, being integral or monolithic therewith. The sphere-like shape may provide more uniform or predictable rocking, bouncing, and translational movements, including spring rates, about the exterior surface of base **20**. The pressurized air returns the inflated toy animal **10** back to its original shape, as the weight of the user is shifted away from toy **10**.

[0028] Seat **30** provides a place upon which a user can sit. Here the user can rock back and forth to simulate the natural gait of any animal, including a horse or bull, or can bounce upon and with toy **10**. Bouncing may occur in a purely vertical up and down manner, or bouncing may occur in a plane not perpendicular with the ground (angular) and thereby facilitate the translation of toy **10** across any surface. Seat **30** may be cupped or curved to provide a more stable place for a user to sit. Seat **30** generally represents the bare back of an animal; however, seat **30** may comprise a saddle, blanket, rug, or the like. Seat **30** may also include a hump **32**, depicting a feature of an animal's back, such as the hump on the back of a camel or bull. Further, as stated above, toy **10** may depict an animal in any position, such as, for example, depicting the animal on its back. Therefore, in the example, seat **30** would depict the animal's belly.

[0029] Front end **40** extends from the rotund base **20** and/or seat **30**. Front end **40** generally represents the head **41** of any desired animal, including any included head and facial features such as, for example, eyes **42**, ears **43**, nose **44**, mouth **45** (which may include a tongue and at least one tooth), hair (or mane) **46**, forelock **47**, or horns **49**. Hair (or mane) **46** and forelock **47** may be natural or synthetic hair, which can be combed, braided, and washed, or molded material integral or monolithic with toy **10** or front end **40**. Front end **40** may also include a neck **48**. All features may not be included, such as, for example, when a molded hair **46** or forelock **47** covers an eye or eyes, the covered eye or eyes may not be included. Also, for example, if a mouth is depicted open, teeth and a tongue may be shown. Other items may be integral or monolithic with front end **40**, such as, for example, a hat, a hood, a head band, a scarf, glasses, a beret, hair clips, etc. Toy **10** may include a grasping portion (or means for grasping) **50**, which allows a user to securely grasp toy **10** and balance himself or herself upon toy **10**. Grasp **50** may comprise, for example, a handle, a bridle, reins, or a rope, which may be integral or monolithic with toy **10**. Grasp **50** may also comprise any other existing features on toy **10**, such as, for example, ears **43** or hair **46**, or a saddle, hat, scarf, etc.

[0030] Toy **10** may include a rear end **60** and legs **70**. Rear end **60** generally represents the back side of an animal, and includes, for example, the animal's buttocks **62** and tail **64**. Tail **64** may be natural or synthetic hair, which can be combed, braided, and washed, or molded material integral or monolithic with toy **10** or rear end **60**. Legs **70** extend from toy **10** separately or in pairs, such as from base **20**, front end **40**, and/or tail **60**. Legs **70** may include any number of legs, such as, for example, two front legs and/or two rear legs. Legs **70** may be aesthetic or structural, meaning legs **70** may operate as safety stops and limit the rotation, rocking, or bouncing of toy **10**. Legs **70** may also include leg coverings

or wraps, which may be integral or monolithic or operably attached to legs 70. Finally, the ends of legs 70 may include hooves or feet 72, which may resemble the natural hooves or feet of the depicted animal, or may form shoes or include horseshoes.

[0031] Toy 10 may include separate accessories, which may be used in conjunction with and/or placed upon toy 10. Accessories may include a bridle, a halter, reins, lead rope, a collar, and a pair of stirrups, which the user could use to grasp, secure, or balance himself or herself upon toy 10. Accessories may also include any other accessory used with an animal, for example, a saddle (English or western), a blanket, a rug, armor, a costume, hats, headbands, berets, a pair of glasses, a body sheet or cover, leg covers or wraps, shoes, gloves or mittens, a sweater or coat, a pack such as a saddle pack, and grooming accessories (such as brushes, combs, and hair clips). Accessories may be separate from toy 10, or each accessory may be incorporated into toy 10 as a portion thereof, as mentioned above, where it may be joined with toy 10 or formed integral or monolithic therewith. Toy 10 may include a separate docking station, where it can be placed in a stationary position, including, for example, in a vertical position, when not being used. Docking station may function like and resemble an egg carton, meaning it may have a concave pit-like recession for placing base 20. Station may also be themed and may resemble, for example, a pasture, stable, barn stall, garden, dog house, bird cage, castle, etc.

[0032] Although the invention has been described herein with reference to the present embodiments, it will become apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications of the present embodiments of the invention as described herein can be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

- 1. An inflatable toy animal that bounces at the direction of a mounted user, the toy comprising:
  - a means for bouncing the toy, the means comprising a rotund base, wherein at least a portion of the base is inflatable;
  - a seat portion extending from atop the base;
  - a front portion extending from at least one of the base and the seat portion, the front portion including resembling an animal head;
  - a plurality of legs extending from the base;
  - a user grasp, the grasp comprising a handle, rope, bridle, rein, collar, ear, mane or hair; and
  - an air valve.
- 2. The toy of claim 1, further comprising a rear portion extending from at least one of the base and the seat portion.
- 3. The toy of claim 2, wherein the rear portion includes a tail.
- 4. The toy of claim 2, wherein the rear portion includes at least one buttocks.
- 5. The toy of claim 1, wherein the base includes an inflatable internal chamber, the chamber being sphere-like.
- 6. The toy of claim 1, wherein the front portion includes at least one ear, eye, nose, mouth, or neck.
- 7. The toy of claim 1, wherein the seat portion is cupped to help constrain a user upon the toy.

8. The toy of claim 1, wherein the seat portion resembles the back of an animal.

9. The toy of claim 1, wherein at least the base is made from any polymeric material, elastomer, rubber, latex rubber, non-latex rubber, NBR, or a mixture of NBR and PVC.

10. The toy of claim 1, wherein the toy is monolithically formed.

11. The toy of claim 1, wherein the toy is integrally formed.

12. The toy of claim 1, wherein the plurality of legs includes a pair of front legs and a pair of rear legs extending from the base.

13. The toy of claim 1, wherein the plurality of legs extend from the base dimensioned and sized such that the legs do not touch the ground when the toy is vertically oriented.

14. The toy of claim 1, further comprising accessories that are operably attached to the toy.

15. An inflatable toy animal that bounces at the direction of a mounted user, the toy comprising:

- a means for bouncing the toy, the means comprising an animal-shaped body having a rotund base, wherein at least a portion of the base is inflatable;
- a means for sitting on the toy, the means comprising a seat portion of the body;
- a means for a mounted user to grasp the toy; and
- a means for inflating the toy,

wherein the body includes a front portion that resembles an animal head and extends from at least one of the base and the seat portion.

16. The toy of claim 15, further comprising a rear portion extending from at least one of the base and the seat portion.

17. The toy of claim 15, wherein the means for sitting is cupped to help constrain a user on the toy.

18. The toy of claim 15, wherein the base includes an internal chamber, the chamber being sphere-like.

19. An inflatable toy animal kit, the kit comprising:

- an inflatable toy animal that bounces at the direction of a mounted user comprising: a
- means for bouncing the toy, the means comprising a rotund base, wherein at least a portion of the base is inflatable; a seat portion extending from atop the base; a front portion extending from at least one of the base and the seat portion, the front portion resembling an animal head; a plurality of legs extending from the base; a user grasp, the grasp comprising a handle, rope, bridle, rein, collar, ear, mane or hair; and an air valve; and

at least one accessory selected from the following list: a hair brush; a hair braid; a hair clip; a hat; a saddle; a rug; a blanket; a body cover; a leg wrap or cover; a pair of stirrups; shoes; gloves; a saddle pack; a halter; a bridle; a rein; a bit; blinders; a hat; a beret; a head band; a scarf; a collar; a rope; a costume; or armor.

20. The kit of claim 19, further comprising a base for storing the inflatable toy when the toy is at least partially inflated.