



US009648843B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Hofman et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,648,843 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** ***May 16, 2017**

(54) **AUTOMATED SYSTEM FOR APPLYING
DISINFECTANT TO THE TEATS OF DAIRY
LIVESTOCK**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC A01J 7/04; A01K 13/001
(Continued)

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this
patent is extended or adjusted under 35
U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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This patent is subject to a terminal dis-
claimer.

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No. 2,775,130; 4 pages, Nov. 27, 2012.*

(21) Appl. No.: **15/381,403**

(Continued)

(22) Filed: **Dec. 16, 2016**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2017/0094935 A1 Apr. 6, 2017

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Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Continuation of application No. 15/162,977, filed on
May 24, 2016, now Pat. No. 9,560,832, which is a
(Continued)

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A01J 7/04 (2006.01)
B25J 9/16 (2006.01)

(Continued)

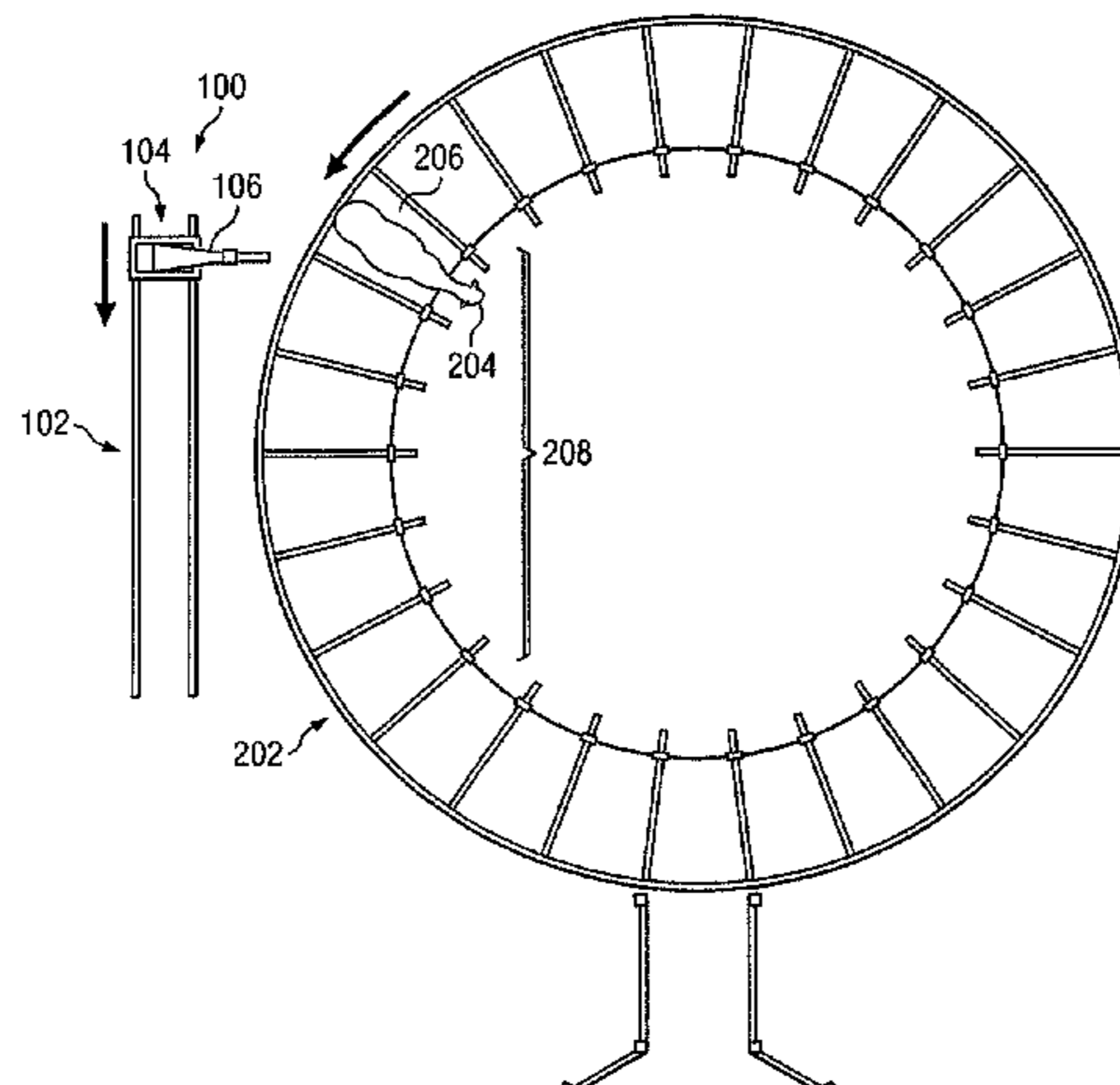
(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **A01J 7/04** (2013.01); **A01J 5/003**
(2013.01); **A01J 5/007** (2013.01); **A01J**
5/0175 (2013.01);

(Continued)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for operating a robotic arm, comprises determin-
ing a speed of rotation of a rotary milking platform, the
rotary milking platform having a stall for a dairy livestock.
The method continues by moving a carriage along a track
positioned adjacent to the rotary milking platform at a rate
that is based at least in part upon the determined speed of
rotation of the rotary milking platform, wherein the carriage
moves independently of the rotary milking platform and in
a direction corresponding to a direction of rotation of the
rotary milking platform. The method continues by extending
a robotic arm that is coupled to the carriage between the legs
of the dairy livestock, wherein the robotic arm remains
extended between the legs of the dairy livestock for a period
of time as the stall rotates adjacent to the robotic arm. The

(Continued)



method concludes by retracting the robotic arm from between the legs of the dairy livestock as the stall rotates adjacent to the robotic arm.

21 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets

Related U.S. Application Data

continuation of application No. 13/454,386, filed on Apr. 24, 2012, now Pat. No. 9,474,248, which is a division of application No. 13/095,963, filed on Apr. 28, 2011, now Pat. No. 8,707,905.

(60) Provisional application No. 61/378,871, filed on Aug. 31, 2010.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

- B25J 9/00* (2006.01)
- A01J 5/003* (2006.01)
- A01J 5/007* (2006.01)
- A01J 5/017* (2006.01)
- A01K 1/12* (2006.01)
- A01K 13/00* (2006.01)
- G06T 1/00* (2006.01)
- G06T 7/73* (2017.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

- CPC *A01K 1/126* (2013.01); *A01K 13/001* (2013.01); *B25J 9/0027* (2013.01); *B25J 9/0096* (2013.01); *B25J 9/1679* (2013.01); *G06T 1/0014* (2013.01); *G06T 7/73* (2017.01); *G06T 2207/10004* (2013.01); *Y10S 901/06* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

USPC 119/14.04, 650, 651, 665, 670
See application file for complete search history.

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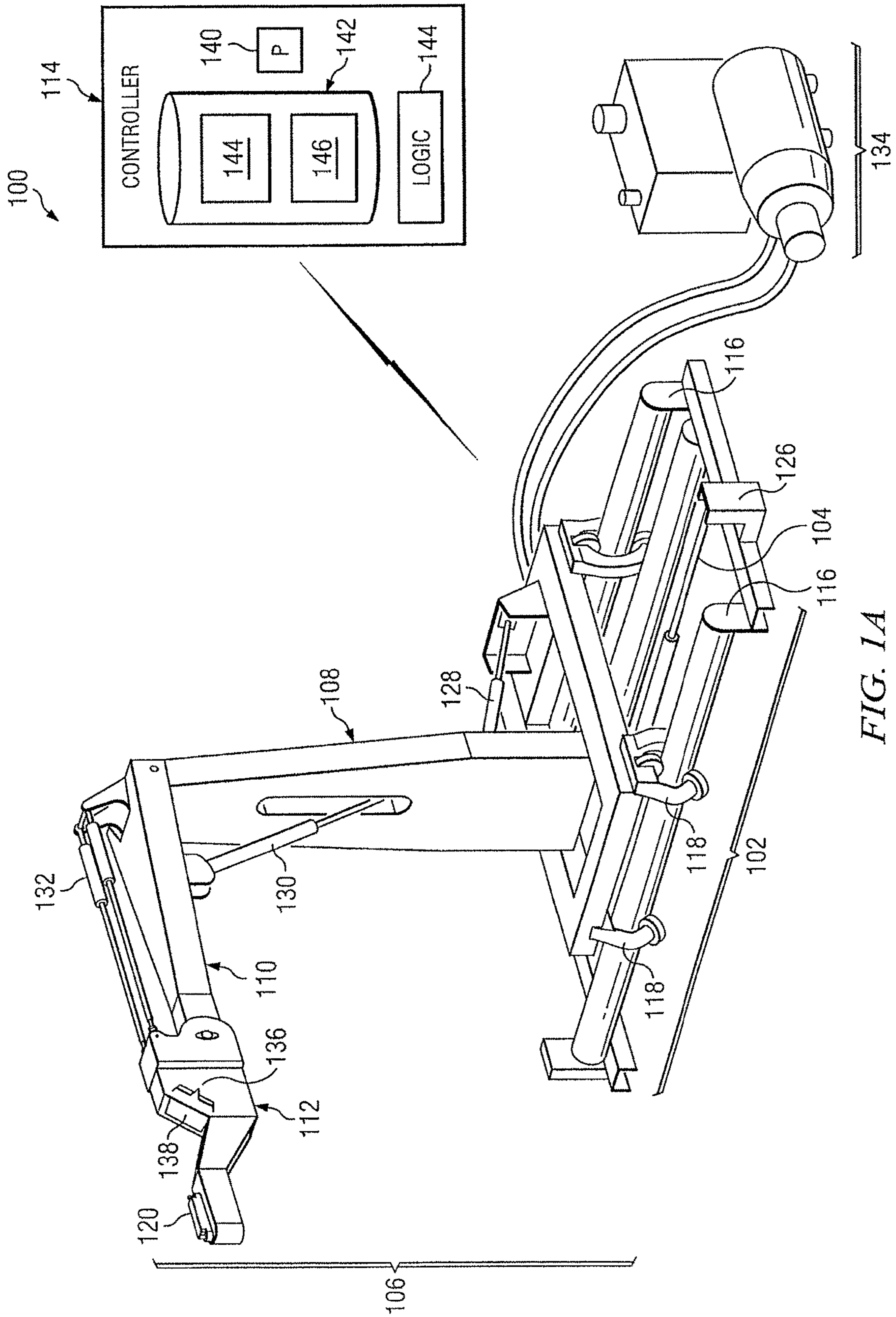
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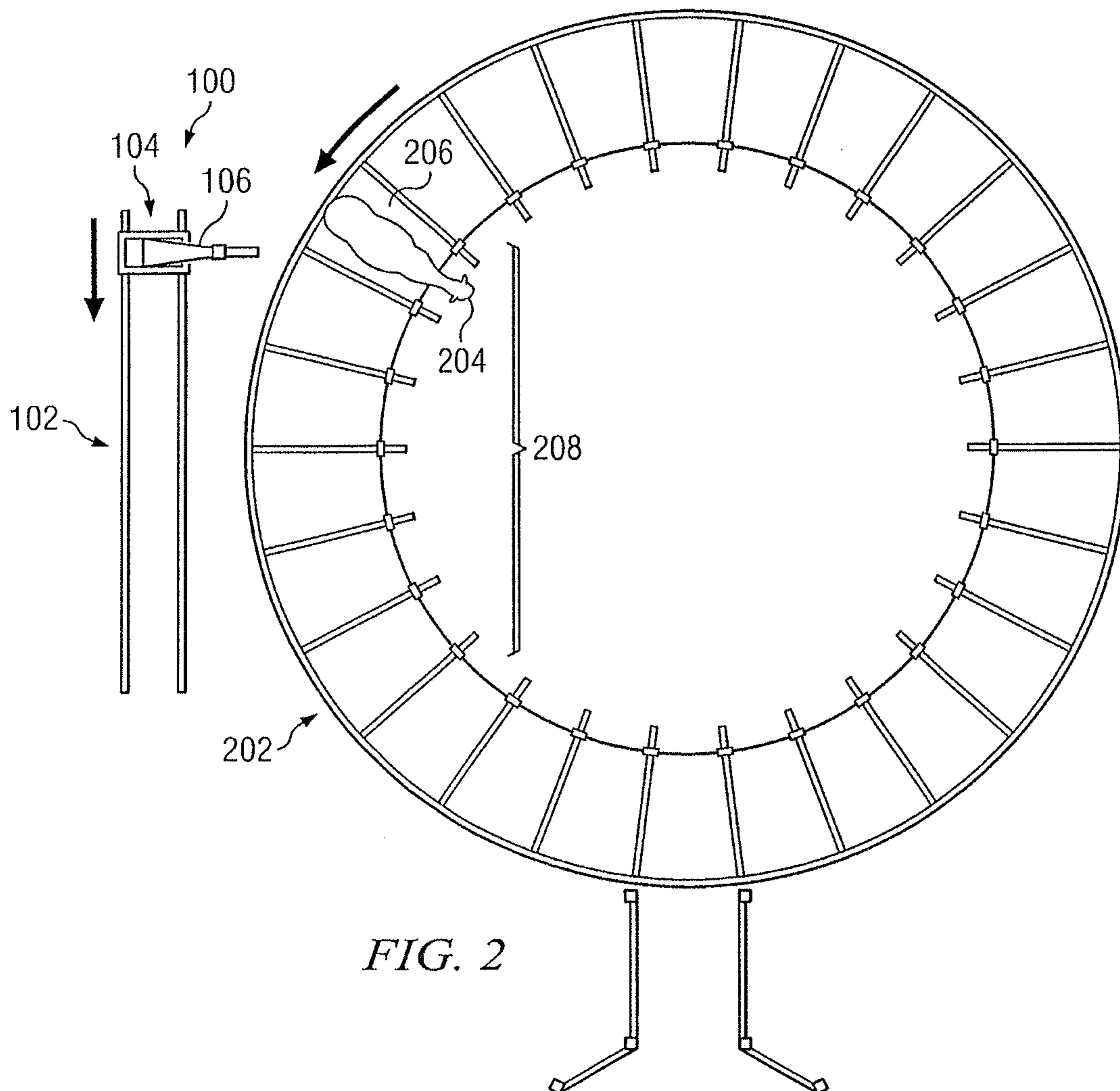
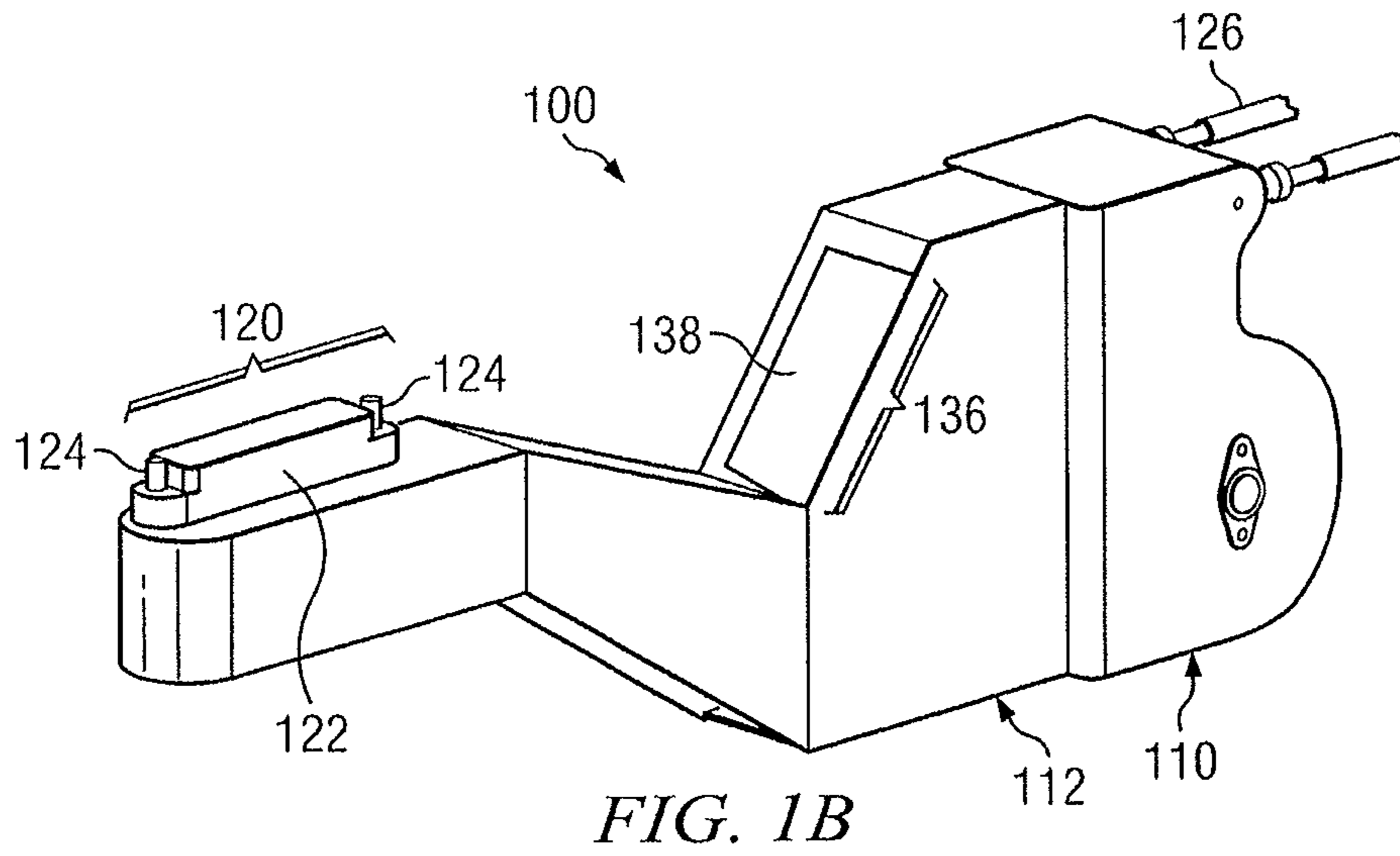
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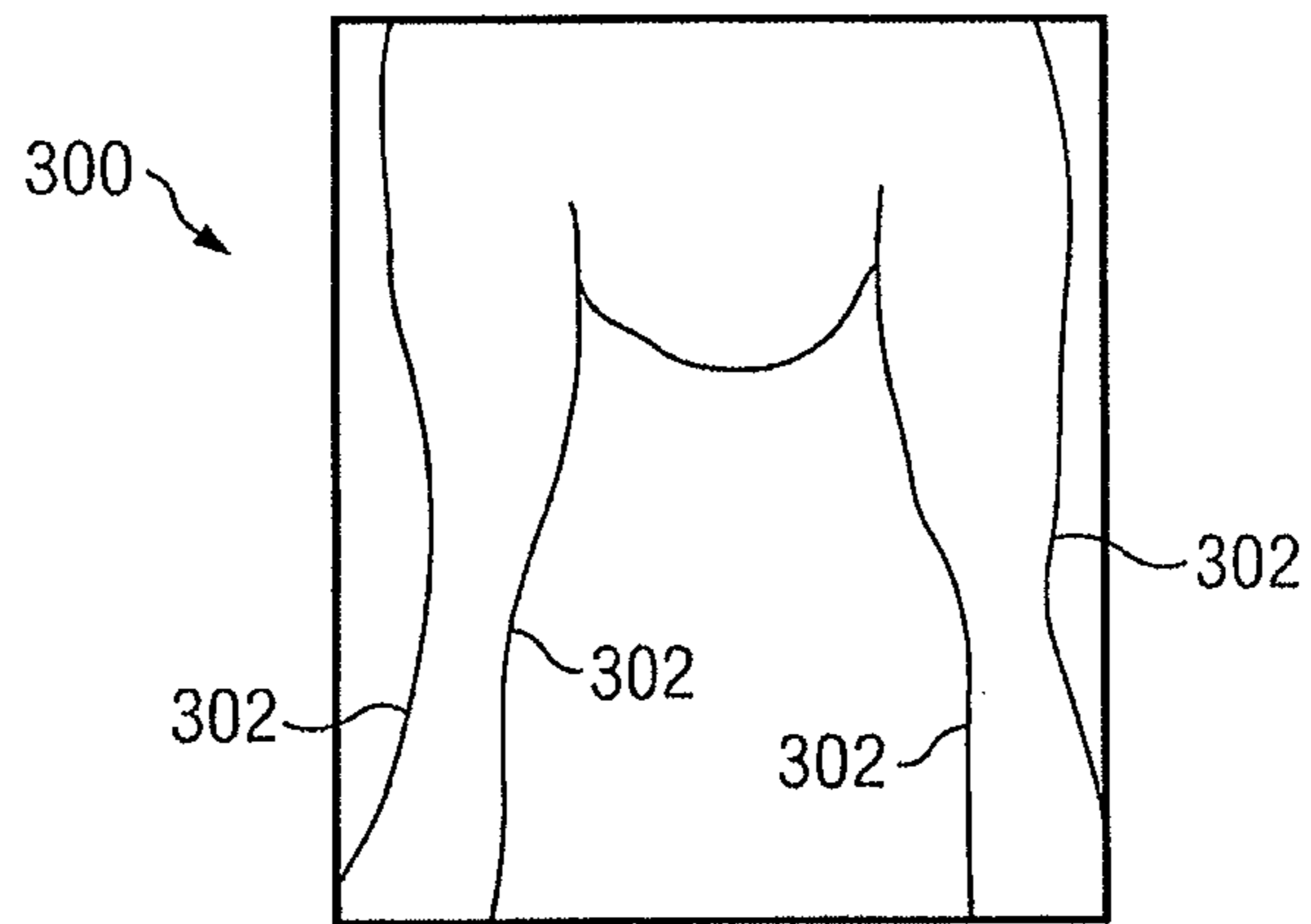


FIG. 3

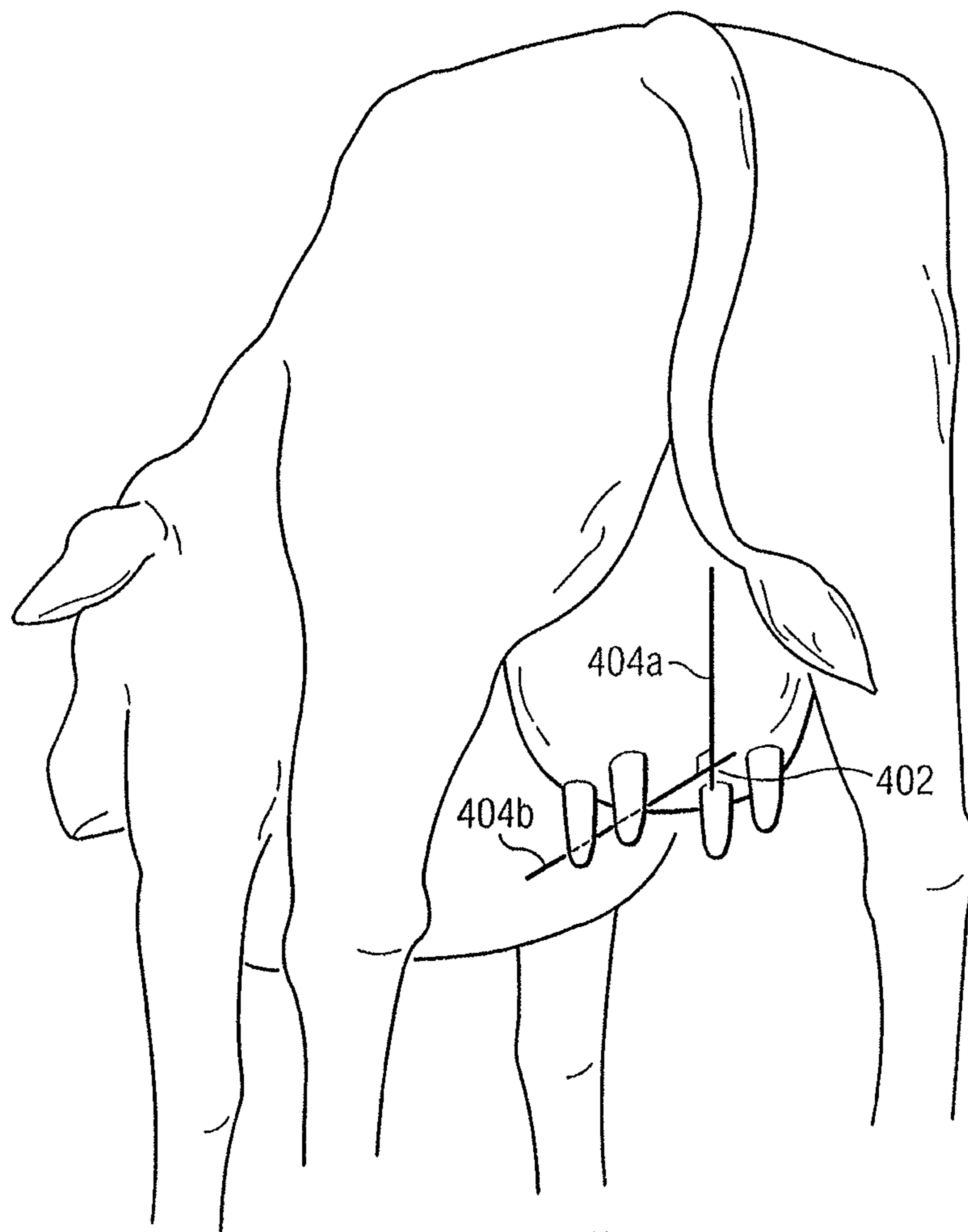


FIG. 4

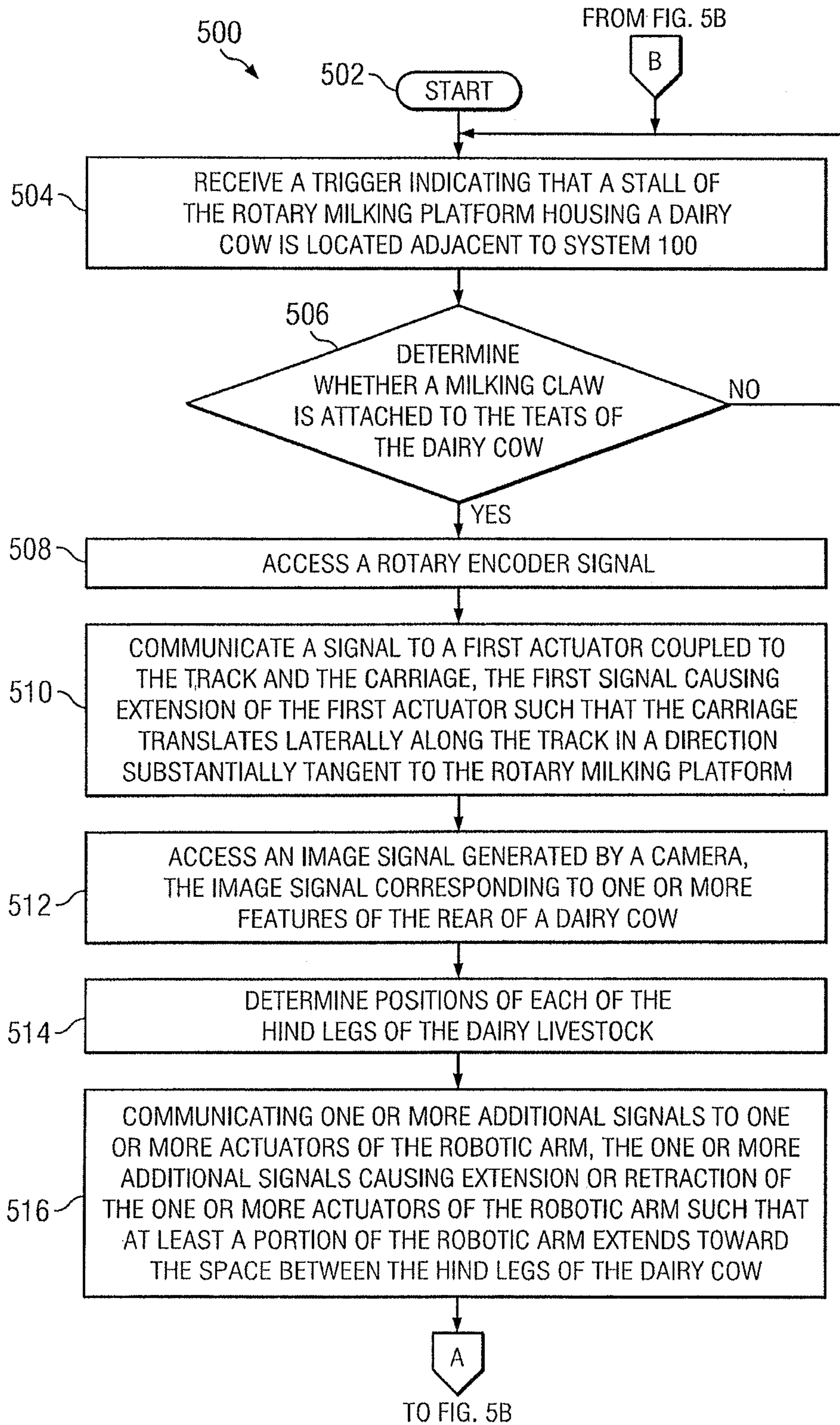


FIG. 5A

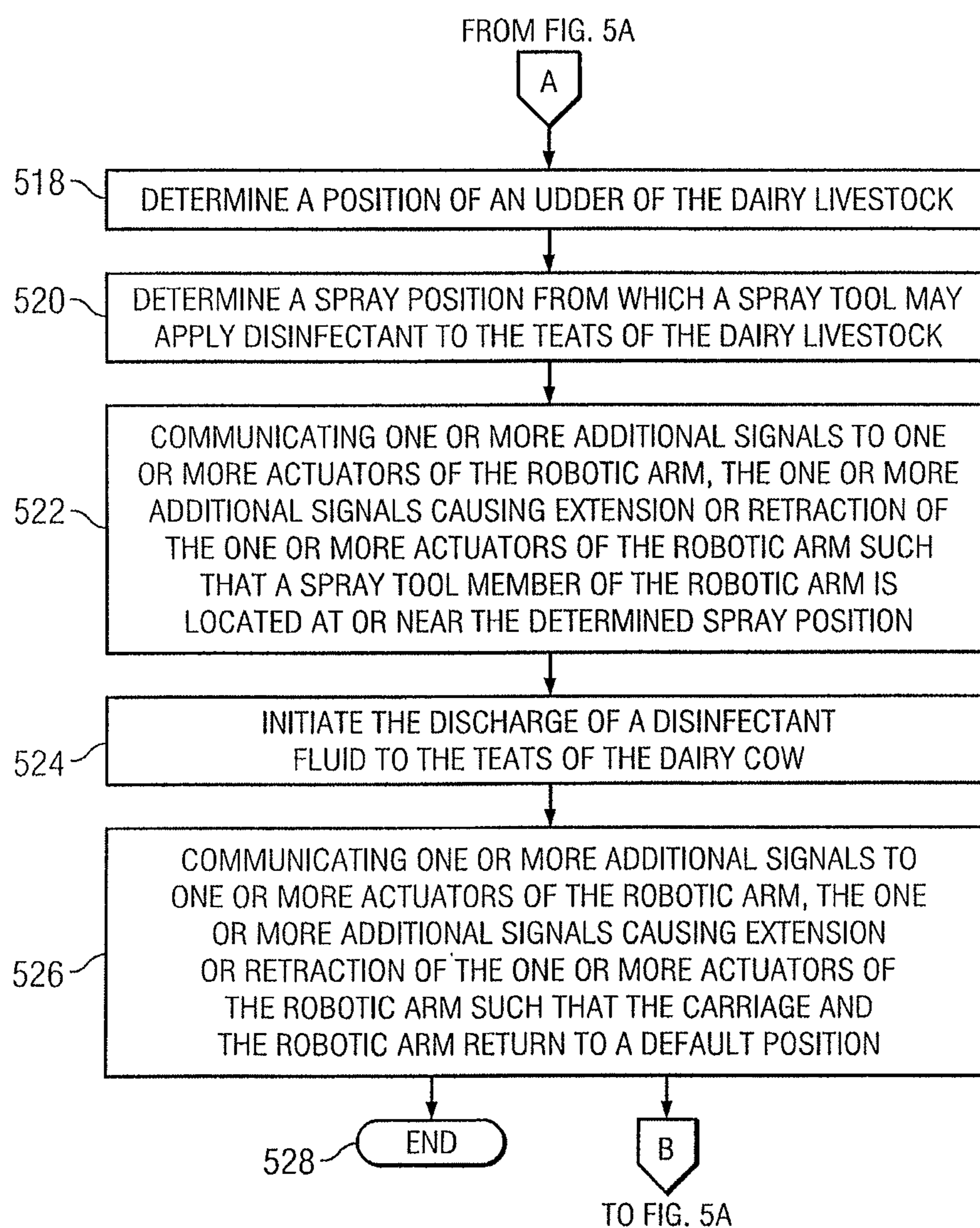


FIG. 5B

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AUTOMATED SYSTEM FOR APPLYING DISINFECTANT TO THE TEATS OF DAIRY LIVESTOCK

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/162,977 filed May 24, 2016 which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/454,386 filed Apr. 24, 2012, now U.S. Pat. No. 9,474,248 issued Oct. 25, 2016 which is a divisional application claiming the benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) of the priority of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/095,963, filed Apr. 28, 2011, which is now U.S. Pat. No. 8,707,905 issued Apr. 29, 2014 entitled “Automated System for Applying Disinfectant to the Teats of Dairy Livestock,” which claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/378,871, filed Aug. 31, 2010, entitled “Automated System for Applying Disinfectant to the Teats of Dairy Livestock,” the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates generally to dairy farming and more particularly to a automated system for applying disinfectant to the teats of dairy livestock.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Over time, the size and complexity of dairy milking operations has increased. Accordingly, the need for efficient and scalable systems and methods that support dairy milking operations has also increased. Systems and methods supporting dairy milking operations, however, have proven inadequate in various respects.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to embodiments of the present disclosure, disadvantages and problems associated with previous systems supporting dairy milking operations may be reduced or eliminated.

In certain embodiments, a system for applying disinfectant to the teats of a dairy livestock includes a carriage mounted on a track, the carriage operable to translate laterally along the track. The system further includes a robotic arm including a first member pivotally attached to the carriage such that the first member may rotate about a point of attachment to the carriage, a second member pivotally attached to the first member such that the second member may rotate about a point of attachment to the first member, and a spray tool member pivotally attached to the second member such that the spray tool member may rotate about a point of attachment to the second member. The system further includes a controller operable to cause at least a portion of the robotic arm to extend between the hind legs of a dairy livestock such that a spray tool of the spray tool member is located at a spray position from which the spray tool may discharge an amount of disinfectant to the teats of the dairy livestock.

Particular embodiments of the present disclosure may provide one or more technical advantages. For example, certain embodiments of the present disclosure may provide an automated system for applying disinfectant to the teats of dairy livestock. Additionally, certain embodiments of the present disclosure may minimize overspray, thereby reducing the volume of the disinfectant needed. By reducing the

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need for human labor and reducing the volume of disinfectant used, certain embodiments of the present disclosure may reduce the cost associated with applying disinfectant to the teats of dairy livestock in certain dairy milking operations. Furthermore, the use of the automated system of the present disclosure in conjunction with a rotary milking platform may increase the throughput of the milking platform, thereby increasing the overall milk production of the milking platform.

Certain embodiments of the present disclosure may include some, all, or none of the above advantages. One or more other technical advantages may be readily apparent to those skilled in the art from the figures, descriptions, and claims included herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

To provide a more complete understanding of the present invention and the features and advantages thereof, reference is made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIGS. 1A-1B illustrate perspective views of an example automated system for applying disinfectant to the teats of a dairy livestock, according to certain embodiments of the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 illustrates the automated system for applying disinfectant to the teats of a dairy livestock depicted in FIG. 1 positioned adjacent to a rotary milking platform, according to certain embodiments of the present disclosure;

FIG. 3 illustrates an example snapshot of an image signal identifying located edges is depth corresponding to the edges of the hind legs of a dairy cow, according to certain embodiments of the present disclosure;

FIG. 4 illustrates an example spray position determined based on a tangent to the rear of the located udder a tangent to the bottom of the located udder, according to certain embodiments of the present disclosure; and

FIGS. 5A-5B illustrate an example method for applying disinfectant to the teats of a dairy livestock, according to certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGS. 1A-1B illustrate perspective views of an example automated system **100** for applying disinfectant to the teats of a dairy livestock, according to certain embodiments of the present disclosure. System **100** includes a track **102** and a carriage **104**, carriage **104** being mounted on track **102** such that carriage **104** is able to translate laterally along track **102**. System **100** further includes a robotic arm **106** coupled to carriage **104**. Robotic arm **106** includes a first member **108** pivotally attached to carriage **104**, a second member **110** pivotally attached to first member **108**, and a spray tool member **112** pivotally attached to second member **110**. System **100** further includes a controller **114** operable to control the movement of carriage **104** and robotic arm **106** such that at least a portion of robotic arm **106** may extend between the hind legs of a dairy livestock in order to apply disinfectant to the teats of the dairy livestock.

Although a particular implementation of system **100** is illustrated and primarily described, the present disclosure contemplates any suitable implementation of system **100**, according to particular needs. Additionally, although the present disclosure contemplates system **100** facilitating the application of any suitable liquid to the teats of any suitable dairy livestock (e.g., cows, goats, sheep, water buffalo, etc.),

the remainder of this description is detailed with respect to the application of disinfectant to the teats of dairy cows.

Track **102** may include any suitable combination of structure and materials facilitating the attachment of carriage **104** thereto such that carriage **104** may translate laterally along track **102**. Carriage **104** may include any suitable combination of structure and materials forming a base for robotic arm **106** that may translate laterally along track **102**. For example, track **102** may include one or more tubular track members **116** each corresponding to one or more rollers **118** of carriage **104**. Rollers **118** of carriage **104** may roll along track members **116**, permitting carriage **104** to translate laterally along track **102**.

In certain embodiments, as illustrated in FIG. 2, system **100** may be positioned adjacent to a rotary milking platform **202** such that carriage **104** may move along track **102** tangent to a rotary milking platform **202**. Movement of carriage **104** tangent to rotary milking platform **202** may permit robotic arm **106** to track the movement of a dairy cow **204** located in a milking stall **206** of the rotary milking platform **202**. Accordingly, at least a portion of robotic arm **106** may remain extended between the hind legs of the dairy cow **204** (as discussed detail below) as the dairy cow **204** rotates through the area **208** of the rotary milking platform **202** located adjacent to system **100**. Although system **100** is primarily described as being used in conjunction with milking stalls **206** of a rotary milking platform **202** throughout the remainder of this description, the present disclosure contemplates system **100** being used in conjunction with any suitable type of milking stall, according to particular needs.

Returning to FIGS. 1A-1B, robotic arm **106** may include a first member **108** pivotally attached to carriage **104** such that first member **108** may rotate about a point of attachment to carriage **104**. Robotic arm **106** may additionally include a second member **110** pivotally attached to first member **108** such that second member **110** may rotate about a point of attachment to first member **108**. Robotic arm **106** may additionally include a spray tool member **112** pivotally attached to second member **110** such that spray tool member **112** may rotate about a point of attachment to second member **110**. Although members **108-112** of robotic arm **106** are depicted as having a particular structure, the present disclosure contemplates members **108-112** each having any suitable structure, according to particular needs.

In certain embodiments, robotic arm **106** may additionally include a spray tool **120** attached to spray tool member **112**. Spray tool **120** may be operable to discharge an amount of disinfectant to the teats of a dairy cow. For example (as depicted in FIG. 1B), spray tool **120** may include a linear member **122** having a spray nozzle **124** located at either end. Linear member **122** may be operable to rotate about the point attachment to spray tool member **112** such that spray nozzles **124** may discharge the disinfectant in a substantially circular pattern. As a result, the width of spray tool member **112** (including spray tool **120**) may be minimized as spray tool member **112** passes between the hind legs of a dairy cow (as described below) while having a spray coverage area wide enough to cover each of the teats of a dairy cow once the spray tool member **112** is positioned beneath the dairy cow.

In certain embodiments, system **100** may include a first actuator **126**, a second actuator **128**, a third actuator **130**, and a fourth actuator **132**. Actuators **126-132** may each be operable to extend and retract to cause movement of carriage **102** and/or robotic arm **106** (as described in detail below). For example, the extension/retraction of actuators **126-132** may be governed by an actuator drive mechanism **134**.

Actuator drive mechanism **134** may include a hydraulic pump, a pneumatic pump, or any other suitable drive mechanism operable to cause extension/retraction of actuators **126-132**.

First actuator **126** may be attached to track **102** and carriage **104** such that extension/retraction of first actuator **126** causes movement of carriage **104** along track **102**. Second actuator **128** may be attached to carriage **104** and first member **108** such that extension/retraction of second actuator **128** causes rotation of first member **108** about the point of attachment to carriage **104**. Third actuator **130** may be attached to first member **108** and second member **110** such that extension/retraction of third actuator **130** causes rotation of second member **110** about the point of attachment to first member **108**. Fourth actuator **132** may be attached to second member **110** and spray tool member **112** such that extension/retraction of fourth actuator **132** causes rotation of spray tool member **112** about the point of attachment to second member **110**.

In certain embodiments, spray tool member **112** may include a vision system **136** housing a camera **138**. Camera **138** may include any suitable camera operable to generate one or more image signals (e.g., image signal **146**, described below) corresponding to the rear and/or underside of a dairy cow (e.g., a dairy cow located in a milking stall of an adjacent rotary milking platform). For example, camera **138** may be a three-dimensional camera operable to generate a three-dimensional video image signal corresponding to the rear of a dairy cow and, as robotic arm **106** moves between the hind legs of the dairy cow, a three-dimensional video image signal corresponding the underside of the dairy cow. Based on the image signal(s) generated by camera **138**, controller **114** may determine a spray position at which spray tool **120** may be positioned in order to apply disinfectant to the teats of the dairy cow (as described in detail below).

Although camera **138** is described as being a three-dimensional camera throughout the remainder of this description, the present disclosure contemplates camera **138** as being any suitable camera (e.g., a two-dimensional camera), according to particular needs. Additionally, although the vision system **136** housing camera **138** is depicted and primarily described as being positioned on spray tool member **112**, the present disclosure contemplates vision system **136** being positioned at any suitable location.

In certain embodiments, various components of system **100** (e.g., spray tool **120**, actuators **126-132**, and camera **138**) may be communicatively coupled to controller **114** (e.g., via a network facilitating wireless or wireline communication). Controller **114** may control the position of robotic arm **106** (e.g., by controlling the extension/retraction of actuator **126-132**) such that at least a portion of robotic arm **106** extends between the hind legs of a dairy cow in order to discharge an amount of disinfectant to the teats of the dairy cow.

Controller **114** may include one or more computer systems at one or more locations. Each computer system may include any appropriate input devices (such as a keypad, touch screen, mouse, or other device that can accept information), output devices, mass storage media, or other suitable components for receiving, processing, storing, and communicating data. Both the input devices and output devices may include fixed or removable storage media such as a magnetic computer disk, CD-ROM, or other suitable media to both receive input from and provide output to a user. Each computer system may include a personal computer, workstation, network computer, kiosk, wireless data

port, personal data assistant (PDA), one or more processors within these or other devices, or any other suitable processing device. In short, controller 114 may include any suitable combination of software, firmware, and hardware.

Controller 114 may additionally include one or more processing modules 140. The processing modules 140 may each include one or more microprocessors, controllers, or any other suitable computing devices or resources and may work, either alone or with other components of system 100, to provide a portion or all of the functionality of system 100 described herein. Controller 114 may additionally include (or be communicatively coupled to via wireless or wireline communication) one or more memory modules 142. The memory modules 142 may each include any memory or database module and may take the form of volatile or non-volatile memory, including, without limitation, magnetic media, optical media, random access memory (RAM), read-only memory (ROM), removable media, or any other suitable local or remote memory component.

Controller 114 may additionally include control logic 144. Control logic 144 may include any information, logic, and/or instructions stored and/or executed by controller 114 to (1) determine, based on an image signal generated by camera 138 (e.g., image signal 146, described below), a spray position from which spray tool member 120 may apply disinfectant to the teats of a dairy cow, and (2) control the movement of carriage 106 and/or robotic arm 106 such that spray tool member 120 may be positioned at or near the determined spray position.

In operation of an example embodiment of system 100 (an embodiment in which system 100 is positioned adjacent to a rotary milking platform having a milking stall in which a dairy cow is located), controller 114 may be operable to receive a trigger (e.g., from a proximity switch or any other suitable sensor associated with the rotary milking platform) indicating that a stall in which the dairy cow is located has entered an area adjacent to system 100 (e.g., area 208, described above). For example, system 100 may be located relative to a rotary milking platform (e.g., rotary milking platform 202), and disinfectant may be applied to the teats of the dairy cow after the dairy cow has been milked (i.e., after the milking cluster has been removed).

Because disinfectant may not need to be applied to the teats of the dairy cow if a milking cluster is attached, controller 114 may determine whether a milking cluster is attached. If controller 114 determines that a milking cluster is attached, no further action may be performed until a next dairy cow enters the area adjacent to system 100. If controller 114 determines that a milking cluster is not attached, controller 114 may initiate the disinfectant application process by communicating a signal to first actuator 126, the signal causing first actuator to extend such that carriage 102 translates laterally along track 104 in a direction corresponding to the direction of rotation of the rotary milking platform. In certain embodiments, controller 114 may also access a rotary encoder signal 144 generated by a rotary encoder of the rotary milking platform, the accessed rotary encoder signal 144 indicating the speed of rotation of rotary milking platform. Based on the rotary encoder signal 144, controller 114 may communicate a signal to first actuator 126 that causes first actuator 126 to extend at a rate that causes carriage 102 to translate laterally along track 104 at a rate corresponding to the rate of rotation of the rotary milking platform (such that robotic arm 106 may keep pace with the dairy cow located in the milking stall of the rotary milking platform).

Controller 114 may be further operable to access an image signal 146 generated by camera 138. As discussed above, image signal 146 may be a three-dimensional video image signal corresponding (at least initially) to the rear of the dairy cow. Based on the accessed image signal 146, controller 114 may determine positions of each of the hind legs of the dairy cow. For example, controller 114 may process image signal 146 to locate edges in depth, which may correspond to portions of the image signal where the distance from an object transitions from being relatively close to camera 138 (i.e., the hind legs of the dairy cow) to relatively far away from camera 138 (i.e., the area on either side of the hind legs of the dairy cow). Because the hind legs of the dairy cow may be relatively close to camera 138 as compared to the space located between/on either side of the hind legs, the located edges in depth may correspond to the location of the inside and outside edges of the hind legs of the dairy cow. FIG. 3 illustrates an example snapshot 300 of a image signal 146 identifying located edges in depth 302 corresponding to the edges of the hind legs of a dairy cow.

Returning to FIG. 1, controller 114, having determined the positions of each of the hind legs of the dairy cow, may communicate signals to one or more of actuators 126-132, the communicated signals causing extension/retraction of actuators 126-132 such that at least a portion of robotic arm 106 (e.g., spray tool member 112) extends toward the space between the hind legs of the dairy cow (e.g., at a predetermined height relative to the milking stall in which the dairy cow is located). Because image signal 146 may comprise a three-dimensional video image (as described above), the image signal 146 may change in real time as camera 138 moves toward the dairy cow. Accordingly, the present disclosure contemplates that controller 114 may update, either continuously or at predetermined intervals, the determined leg positions as image signal 146 changes.

Controller 114 may be further operable to determine a position of the udder of the dairy cow. In certain embodiments, controller 114 may determine the position of the udder of the dairy cow based on the accessed image 146 signal and/or the determined positions of the hind legs of the dairy cow. For example, controller 114 may process image signal 146 (which may change as the camera 138 moves toward the dairy cow, as described above) in order to trace the located edges in depth corresponding to the inside of the hind legs of the dairy cow (as described above) upwardly until they intersect with the udder of the dairy cow. In certain embodiments, controller 114 may process image signal 146 to determine where the edges in depth transition from being substantially vertical, indicating the inside of the hind legs, to substantially horizontal, indicating the udder (as illustrated in FIG. 3 by the edges in depth 302 corresponding to the inner side of the hind legs of the dairy cow).

Controller 114 may be further operable to determine a spray position from which spray tool 120 may apply disinfectant to the teats of the dairy cow. In certain embodiments, controller 114 may determine the spray position based on image signal 146 and/or the determined position of the udder of the dairy cow. For example, controller 114 may process image signal 146 (which may change as the camera 138 moves toward the dairy cow, as described above) in order to determine the shape of the udder of the dairy cow. Based on the determined shape, controller 114 may determine (1) a tangent to the rear of the located udder, and (2) a tangent to the bottom of the located udder. The spray position may then be determined relative to the intersection of the two tangents (e.g., a predetermined distance below the intersection). FIG. 4 illustrates an example spray position 402 determined by

controller 114 based on a tangent 404a to the rear of the located udder a tangent 404b to the bottom of the located udder.

Returning to FIG. 1, controller 114, having determined the spray position, may communicate additional signals to actuators 126-132, these additional signals causing extension/retraction of actuators 126-132 such that spray tool 120 is positioned substantially at or near the spray position. Once positioned, controller 114 may initiate the discharge of a disinfectant to the teats of the dairy cow. For example, in embodiments in which spray tool 120 comprises a linear member 122 having a spray nozzle 124 at either end, controller 114 may communicate a signal to a valve controlling the flow of fluid to nozzles 124, the signal causing opening of the valve. Fluid pressure may then cause the spray tool member 122 to rotate about the point of attachment to spray tool member 112, causing the discharge of disinfectant in a substantially circular pattern. Member 122 may be sized and the spray pattern of nozzles 124 may be adjusted such that the sprayed circular pattern of disinfectant substantially covers the four teats of the dairy cow. Once the disinfectant has been applied to the teats of the dairy cow, controller 114 may communicate additional signals to actuators 126-132, these additional signals causing extension/retraction of actuators 126-132 such that carriage 104 and robotic arm 106 returns to a default position.

Particular embodiments of system 100 may provide one or more technical advantages. For example, certain embodiments of system 100 may reduce or eliminate the need for human labor to apply the disinfectant to the teats of dairy cow. Additionally, certain embodiments of system 100 may minimize overspray, thereby minimizing the volume of the expensive disinfectant used. Accordingly, certain embodiments of the present disclosure may reduce the cost associated with certain dairy milking operations. Furthermore, the use of system 100 in conjunction with a rotary milking platform may increase the throughput of the milking platform, thereby increasing the overall milk production of the milking platform.

Although a particular implementation of system 100 is illustrated and primarily described, the present disclosure contemplates any suitable implementation of system 100, according to particular needs. Moreover, although the present invention has been described with several embodiments, diverse changes, substitutions, variations, alterations, and modifications may be suggested to one skilled in the art, and it is intended that the invention encompass all such changes, substitutions, variations, alterations, and modifications as fall within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

FIGS. 5A-5B illustrate an example method 500 for applying disinfectant to the teats of a dairy livestock, according to certain embodiments of the present disclosure. The method begins at step 502. At step 504, controller 114 receives a trigger indicating that a stall in which a dairy cow is located (e.g., a stall 206 of a rotary milking platform 202 positioned adjacent to system 100, as illustrated in FIG. 2) has entered an area adjacent to system 100 (e.g., area 208, as illustrated in FIG. 2). For example, the trigger may be received from a proximity switch or any other suitable sensor associated with the rotary milking platform.

At step 506, controller 114 determines whether a milking cluster is attached. If controller 114 determines that a milking cluster is attached, the method returns to step 504. If controller 114 determines that a milking cluster is not attached, the method proceeds to step 508 where controller 114 accesses a rotary encoder signal 144 indicated the speed of rotation of rotary milking platform. At step 510, controller

114 communicates a signal to first actuator 126, the signal causing first actuator to extend such that carriage 102 translates laterally along track 104 in a direction corresponding to the direction of rotation of the rotary milking platform. Additionally, the signal communicated to first actuator 126 causes the first actuator to extend at a rate (determined based on rotary encoder signal 144) that causes carriage 102 to translate laterally along track 104 at a rate corresponding to the rate of rotation of the rotary milking platform. As a result, robotic arm 106 may keep pace with a dairy cow located in a milking stall of the rotary milking platform.

At step 512, controller 114 accesses an image signal 146 generated by camera 138 (e.g., a three-dimensional video image signal corresponding, at least initially, to the rear of the dairy cow). At step 514, controller 114 determines positions of each of the hind legs of the dairy cow. For example, controller 114 may process image signal 146 to locate edges in depth, which may correspond to portions of the image signal where the distance from an object transitions from being relatively close to camera 138 (i.e., the hind legs of the dairy cow) to relatively far away from camera 138 (i.e., the area on wither side of the hind legs of the dairy cow). At step 516, controller 114 communicates signals to one or more of actuators 126-132, the communicated signals causing extension/retraction of actuators 126-132 such that at least a portion of robotic arm 106 (e.g., spray tool member 112) extends toward the space between the hind legs of the dairy cow (e.g., at a predetermined height relative to the milking stall in which the dairy cow is located).

At step 518, controller 114 determines a position of the udder of the dairy cow. In certain embodiments, controller 114 determines the position of the udder of the dairy cow based on the accessed image 146 signal and/or the determined positions of the hind legs of the dairy cow. For example, controller 114 may process image signal 146 (which may change as the camera 138 moves toward the dairy cow, as described above) in order to trace the located edges in depth corresponding to the inside of the hind legs of the dairy cow (as described above) upwardly until they intersect with the udder of the dairy cow.

At step 520, controller 114 determines a spray position from which spray tool 120 may apply disinfectant to the teats of the dairy cow. For example, controller 114 may process image signal 146 (which may change as the camera 138 moves toward the dairy cow, as described above) in order to determine the shape of the udder of the dairy cow. Based on the determined shape, controller 114 may determine (1) a tangent to the rear of the located udder, and (2) a tangent to the bottom of the located udder. The spray position may then be determined relative to the intersection of the two tangents (e.g., a predetermined distance below the intersection).

At step 522, controller 114 communicates additional signals to actuators 126-132, the additional signals causing extension/retraction of actuators 126-132 such that spray tool 120 is positioned substantially at or near the spray position. Once positioned, controller 114 may initiate the discharge of a disinfectant to the teats of the dairy cow at step 524. Once the disinfectant has been applied to the teats of the dairy cow, controller 114 may, at step 526, communicate additional signals to actuators 126-132, these additional signals causing extension/retraction of actuators 126-132 such that carriage 104 and robotic arm 106 returns to a default position. The method then either returns to step 504 (if there are additional dairy cows to which disinfectant is to be applied) or ends at step 528 (if there are no additional dairy cows to which disinfectant is to be applied).

Although the steps of method **500** have been described as being performed in a particular order, the present disclosure contemplates that the steps of method **500** may be performed in any suitable order, according to particular needs.

Although the present disclosure has been described with several embodiments, diverse changes, substitutions, variations, alterations, and modifications may be suggested to one skilled in the art, and it is intended that the disclosure encompass all such changes, substitutions, variations, alterations, and modifications as fall within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for operating a robotic arm, comprising:
 - determining a speed of rotation of a rotary milking platform, the rotary milking platform having a stall for a dairy livestock;
 - moving a carriage along a track positioned adjacent to the rotary milking platform at a rate that is based at least in part upon the determined speed of rotation of the rotary milking platform, wherein the carriage moves independently of the rotary milking platform and in a direction corresponding to a direction of rotation of the rotary milking platform;
 - extending a robotic arm that is coupled to the carriage between the legs of the dairy livestock, wherein the robotic arm remains extended between the legs of the dairy livestock for a period of time as the stall rotates adjacent to the robotic arm; and
 - retracting the robotic arm from between the legs of the dairy livestock as the stall rotates adjacent to the robotic arm.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising discharging a substance to at least some of the teats of the dairy livestock when the robotic arm is extended between the legs of the dairy livestock.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining the rate at which the carriage will move along the track based at least in part upon the determined speed of rotation of the rotary milking platform.
4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - determining whether a milking cluster is attached to the dairy livestock; and
 - extending the robotic arm between the legs of the dairy livestock if it is determined that a milking cluster is not attached to the dairy livestock.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein extending the robotic arm comprises extending the robotic arm between the hind legs of the dairy livestock.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the rotary milking platform has a substantially circular perimeter and the track is parallel to a tangent to the platform.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the movement of the carriage is independent of any physical coupling between the carriage and the rotary milking platform.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the carriage moves along the track independent of any drive mechanism of the rotary milking platform.
9. A method for operating a robotic arm, comprising:
 - determining a rate of lateral movement for a carriage along a track positioned adjacent to a rotary milking platform, wherein the rate of lateral movement is based at least in part upon a speed of rotation of the rotary milking platform, the rotary milking platform having a stall for a dairy livestock;
 - moving the carriage along the track at the determined rate of lateral movement, wherein the carriage moves inde-

- pendently of the rotary milking platform and in a direction corresponding to a direction of rotation of the rotary milking platform;
- extending a robotic arm that is coupled to the carriage between the legs of the dairy livestock, wherein the robotic arm remains extended between the legs of the dairy livestock for a period of time as the stall rotates adjacent to the robotic arm; and
- retracting the robotic arm from between the legs of the dairy livestock as the stall rotates adjacent to the robotic arm.
10. The method of claim 9, further comprising discharging a substance to at least some of the teats of the dairy livestock when the robotic arm is extended between the legs of the dairy livestock.
11. The method of claim 9, further comprising:
 - determining whether a milking cluster is attached to the dairy livestock; and
 - extending the robotic arm between the legs of the dairy livestock if it is determined that a milking cluster is not attached to the dairy livestock.
12. The method of claim 9, wherein extending the robotic arm comprises extending the robotic arm between the hind legs of the dairy livestock.
13. The method of claim 9, wherein the rotary milking platform has a substantially circular perimeter and the track is parallel to a tangent to the platform.
14. The method of claim 9, wherein the movement of the carriage is independent of any physical coupling between the carriage and the rotary milking platform.
15. The method of claim 9, wherein the carriage moves along the track independent of any drive mechanism of the rotary milking platform.
16. A system for operating a robotic arm, comprising:
 - a carriage mounted on a track positioned adjacent to a rotary milking platform having a stall for a dairy livestock, the carriage operable to move along the track independently of the rotary milking platform and in a direction corresponding to a direction of rotation of the rotary milking platform;
 - a controller communicatively coupled to the carriage and operable to determine a rate for the carriage to move along the track based at least in part upon a speed of rotation of the rotary milking platform; and
 - a robotic arm coupled to the carriage and operable to extend between the legs of the dairy livestock, wherein the robotic arm is further operable to remain extended between the legs of the dairy livestock for a period of time as the stall rotates adjacent to the robotic arm and to retract from between the legs of the dairy livestock as the stall rotates adjacent to the robotic arm.
17. The system of claim 1, further comprising a spray tool coupled to the robotic arm and operable to discharge a substance to at least some of the teats of the dairy livestock when the robotic arm is extended between the legs of the dairy livestock.
18. The system of claim 17, wherein the spray tool comprises:
 - a linear member operable to rotate about a point of attachment;
 - a first spray nozzle coupled to the linear member proximate a first end of the linear member; and
 - a second spray nozzle coupled to the linear member proximate a second end of the linear member.
19. The system of claim 16, wherein the rotary milking platform has a substantially circular perimeter and the track is parallel to a tangent to the platform.

20. The system of claim 16, wherein:
the controller is operable to determine whether a milking
cluster is attached to the dairy livestock; and
the robotic arm extends between the legs of the dairy
livestock if the controller determines that a milking 5
cluster is not attached to the dairy livestock.
21. The system of claim 16, wherein the robotic arm is
operable to extend between the hind legs of the dairy
livestock.

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