

air can travel through squeaker 398 in and out of opening 394. If desired, a small piece of tape can be utilized in place of wax plug 419. The tape adheres to the bottom of and seals squeaker 398. After the heating and compression process for applying layer 399 is complete, a small needle is inserted through the top of squeaker and through squeaker 398 to push the piece of tape off the bottom of squeaker 398 to permit air to flow through the squeaker. Alternatively, a blast of compressed air is directed into the top of squeaker 398 to force the tape off the bottom of the squeaker 398. Any other desired method or apparatus can be utilized to remove the tape from the bottom of the squeaker. If desired, and if the tape and/or wax plug will hold, they tape and/or wax plug can be attached to the top, instead of the bottom, of the squeaker 398.

[0193] If fabric layer 399 is applied to core 393 before squeaker 398 is inserted in aperture 396, and membrane 395 is utilized, then membrane 395 functions to prevent air from escaping from opening 394 when core 393 is compressed during the application of layer 399 with compression. After layer 399 is applied, membrane 395 is punctured with a pointed tool before squeaker 398 is inserted. Or, the lower end of squeaker 398 can include a point or cutting edge that punctures membrane 395

[0194] FIGS. 43 and 44 illustrate construction of an animal toy in which a semi-spherical opening 414 is formed in spherical core 404, along with an aperture 415 extending through the core wall to opening 414. The shape and dimension of opening 414 and core 404 need not be semi-spherical or spherical, respectively, and can vary as desired. Aperture 415 includes countersunk portion 416. Opening 417 is formed in and through layer 422. Layer 422 is felt or some other fabric or material. In FIG. 44, squeaker 420 is inserted in aperture 415 and a piece 421 of felt or other fabric or material is used to cover and disguise the location of squeaker 420. Any of the methods or structures described herein or any other desired method or structure can be utilized to insert a squeaker 420 in core 404 or inside opening 414.

[0195] FIGS. 45 to 48 illustrate the assembly of an animal toy in accordance with another embodiment of the invention. FIG. 45 illustrates a solid spherical core 421 with a sound module 422 at the center. Core 421 can be formed in

any desired manner, but it is presently preferred that module 422 be placed at the center of an empty spherical mold and that a polymer powder be placed in the mold and activated to expand, fill the mold, and encase the module 422 in the manner illustrated in FIG. 45. An aperture(s) can be formed through core 421 extending from the outer surface of core 421 to module 422. In FIG. 46, a layer 423 of felt or other fabric has been applied to the outer spherical surface of the core. Any desired method is utilized to apply and secure the layer 423 to core 421. In FIG. 47, aperture 424 is formed through layer 423 and into core 421. In FIG. 48, squeaker 426 is inserted in aperture 424. The shape and dimension of core 421 can vary as desired.

[0196] FIG. 49 illustrates the use of foam, solid rubber, or some other material 229B to embed and anchor the knot 231 or end of a rope 234 in an animal toy 200. Foam 229B includes flat circular end 211A. Toy 200 can take on any shape and dimension, need not include a felt cover, need not include a hollow gas filled compartment 229A (i.e., toy 200 can be completely solid with knot 231 embedded therein), etc.

Having set forth the presently preferred embodiments of our invention in such terms as to enable those skilled in the art to make and use the invention, we claim:

1. A method for producing an animal toy, including the steps of
 - (a) forming a compressible elastically deformable hollow thin-walled elastomer core circumscribing and enclosing a selected gaseous volume and including a center, an outer surface, and a wall;
 - (b) inserting a squeaker in said core to extend from said gaseous volume to said outer surface, said squeaker producing a sound audible to a dog when air travels through said squeaker at a selected flow rate;
 - (c) applying adhesive and a fabric cover to said outer surface of said core; and,
 - (d) heating said core, adhesive, squeaker, and fabric to an elevated temperature to secure said fabric cover on said outer surface extending over said squeaker.

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