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Pratt

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(54) **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR TRACKING AND MANAGING ANIMALS AND/OR FOOD PRODUCTS**

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See application file for complete search history.

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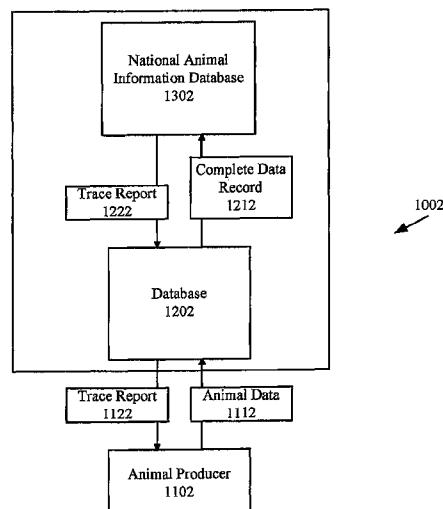
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ABSTRACT

Embodiments of a method and system are described for tracking and managing animals and/or food products. Identification data and location data for animals is entered into a computer system. A data service provider may collect this data and transmitted it to a data trustee. The data trustee may filter the data into official and non-official data, and send official data to an official database. When a public health issue arises, the government may use an identifier for a diseased animal or a location identifier to request a trace report from the data trustee. The data trustee may then use the official data to provide a report showing, for example, which animals have commingled with the diseased animal. Based on this report, other animals can be treated, quarantined, or slaughtered. The disclosed embodiments also may be used to facilitate commercial transactions by providing data that validates an animal's health and food quality.

49 Claims, 81 Drawing Sheets



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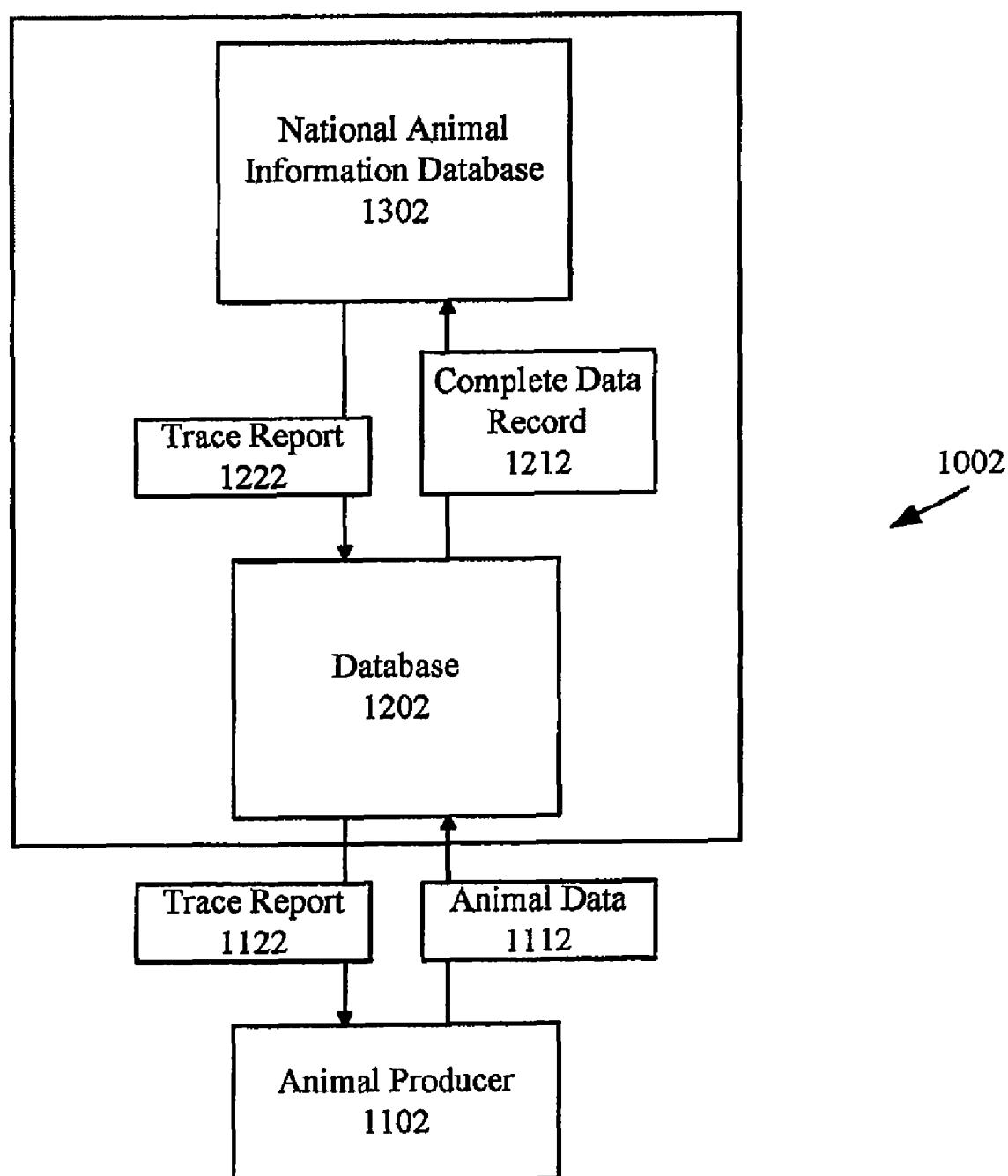
FIG. 1

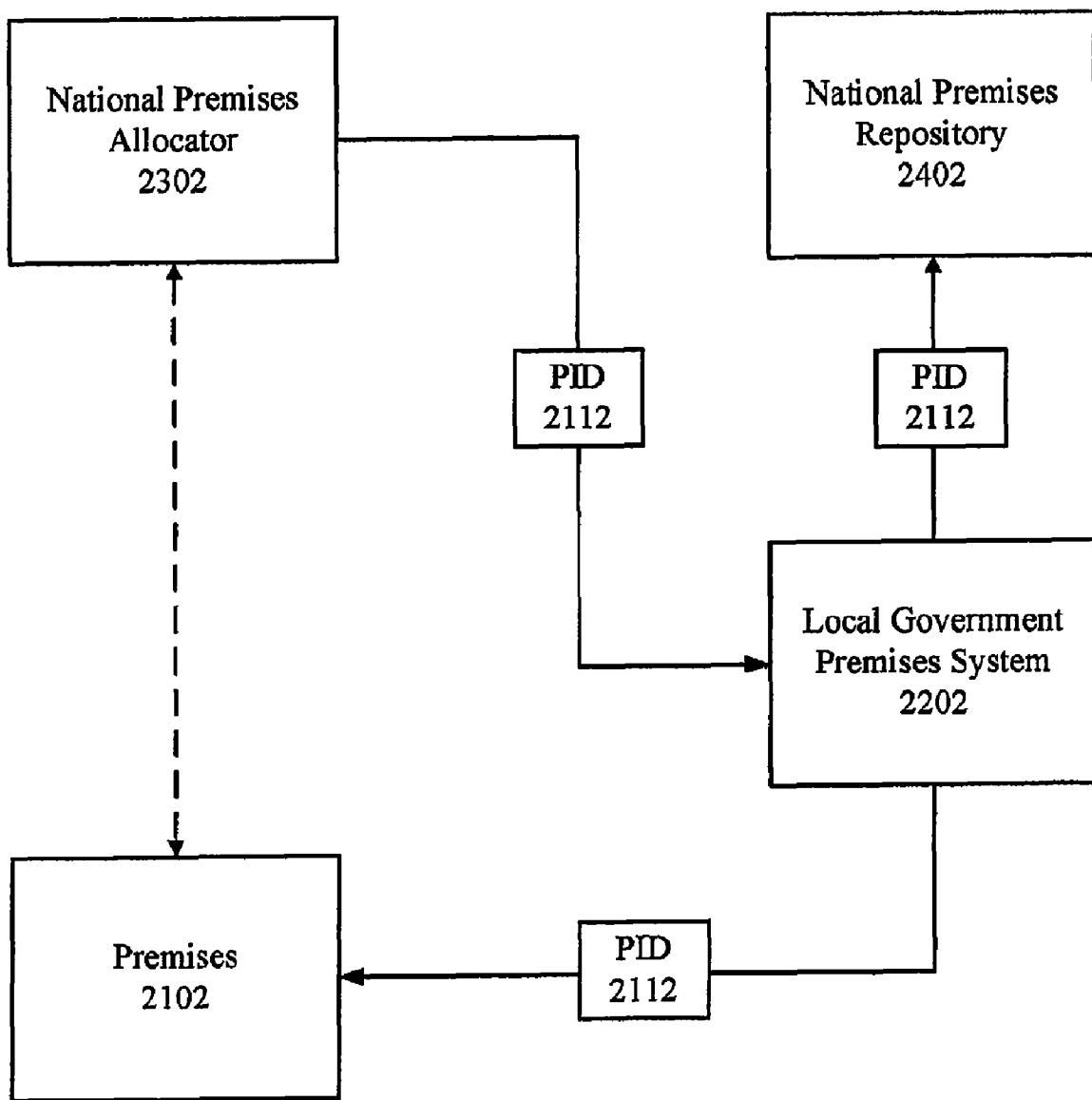
FIG. 2

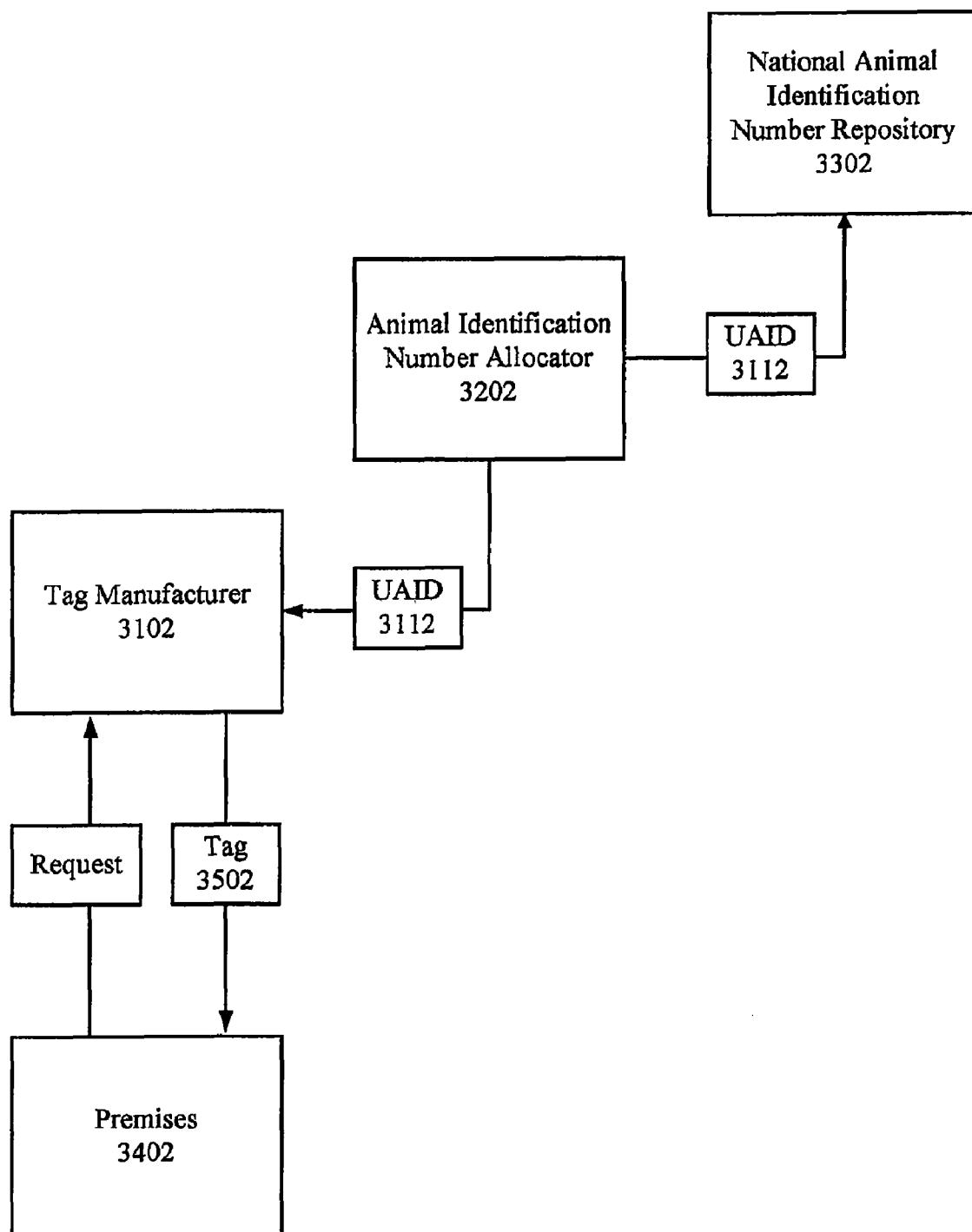
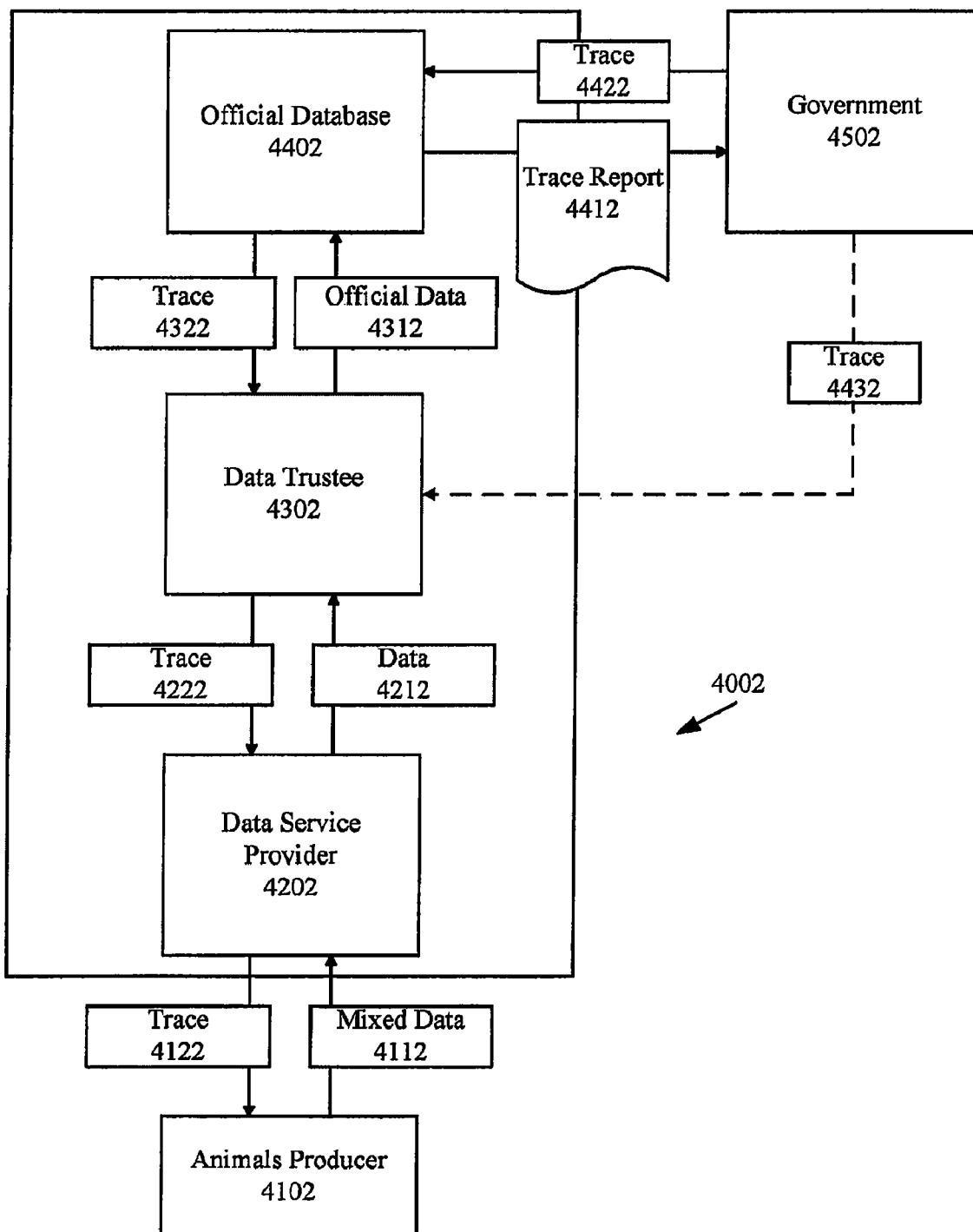
FIG. 3

FIG. 4

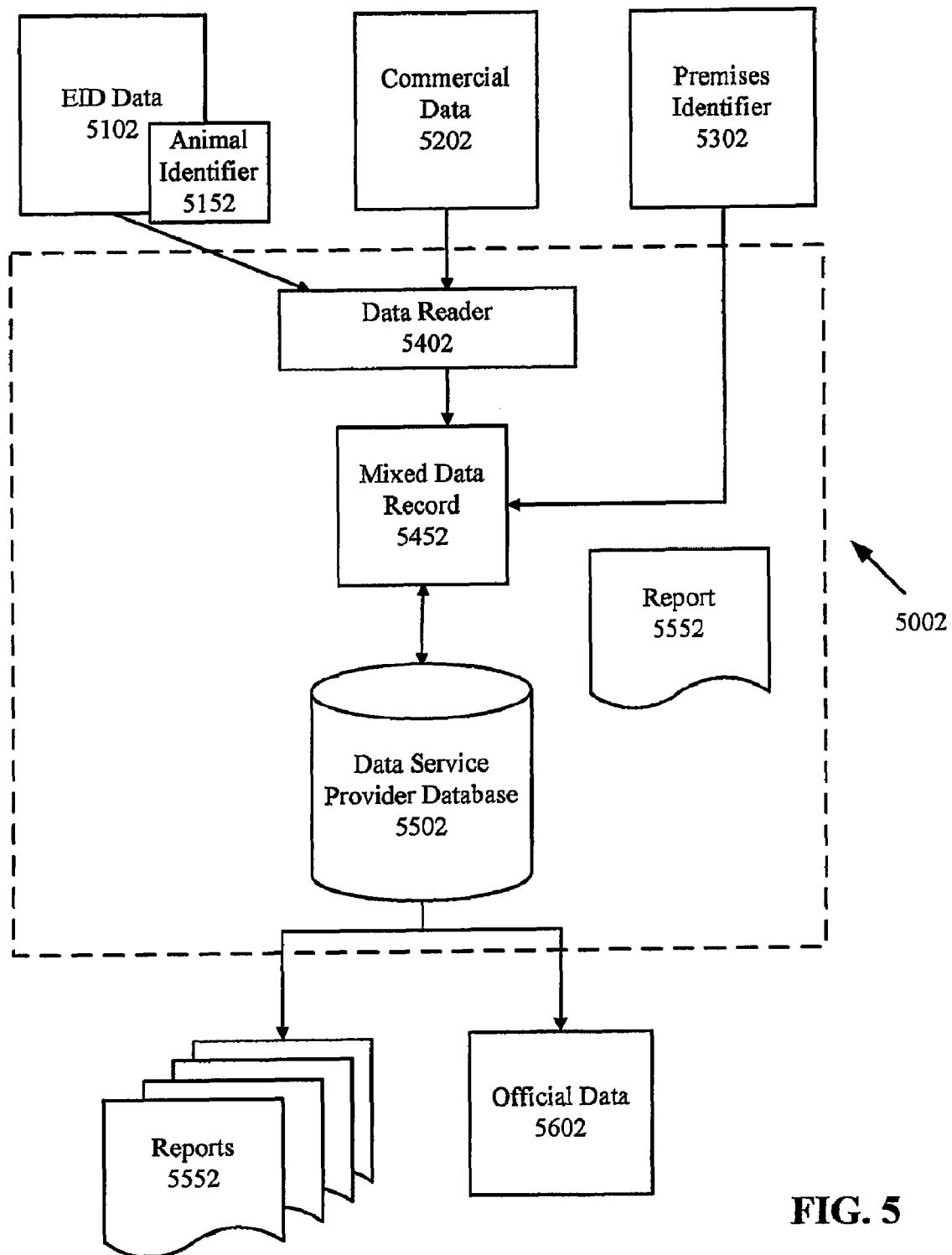


FIG. 5

FIG. 6A

MOVE-OUT Confirmation Report*

BIE Documents Id FC44AA8F09/0

Date of Event 08/05/09
 Source Premise S200971 Stocker S200971
 Destination Premise F201565 Feedlot F201565
 Number of Animals 38 Confirmed – 0 Non Reconciled

Identifier	Type	Species	Premise	Dates at Premise
841903000065870 10920167	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -
841800000674852 841800000674852 100920185	UAIN DAINRF DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -
841800000674816 841800000674816	UAIN DAINRF	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -
841903000065824 100920110	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -
841903000065824 100920138	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -
84190000065804 100920086	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -
841800000674811 841800000674811 100920144	UAIN DAINRF DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -
841903000065916 841800000674885 100920218	UAIN DAINRF DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -
841904000033767 100904809	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed Confirmed	06/24/2005 – 04/28/2006 04/29/2006 – 04/30/2006 05/01/2006 – 08/05/2006 08/06/2006 -

*Confirmation means: 1) Premise ID valid. 2) UAIN's assigned valid. 3) Traceback is as reported

FIG 6B

MOVE-IN Confirmation Report*

BIE Document Id FC15D07E7C/0

Date of Event 08/24/03
 Source Premise C200683 Cow/Calf C200683
 Destination Premise A201547 Auction A201547
 Number of Animals 0 Confirmed – 7 Non Reconciled

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841902000019097 100353485	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed NON-RECONCILED	12/19/2002 – 08/24/2003 – 08/25/2003
841902000019081 100353468	UAIN DAINRF	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed NON-RECONCILED	12/19/2002 – 08/24/2003 – 08/25/2003
841902000019070 100353456	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed NON-RECONCILED	12/19/2002 – 08/24/2003 – 08/25/2003
841902000019098 841800000108153 1003533486	UAIN DAINRF DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed NON-RECONCILED	12/19/2002 – 08/24/2003 – 08/25/2003
841902000019055 100353440	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed NON-RECONCILED	12/19/2002 – 08/24/2003 – 08/25/2003
841902000019065 100353451	UAIN DAINV1	Bovine	Confirmed Confirmed NON-RECONCILED	12/19/2002 – 08/24/2003 – 08/25/2003

*Confirmation means: 1) Premise ID valid. 2) UAIN's assigned valid. 3) Traceback is as reported

FIG. 6C

TAG-APPLIED Confirmation Report*

BIE Document Id FC5663F4A3/0

Date of Event 04/19/07
 Source Premise C200638 Cow/Calf C200638
 Destination Premise C200638 Cow/Calf C200638
 Number of Animals 193 Confirmed – 0 Non Reconciled

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101319325	DAINV1			
841901000153086	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
841800001073876	DAINRF			
101319209	DAINV1			
841901000153067	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
101319209	DAINV1			
841901000153042	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
101319155	DAINV1			
841901000153165	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
841800001073969	DAINRF			
841901000153135	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
841800001073931	DAINRF			
841901000153160	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
101319296	DAINV1			
841901000153050	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
841800001073833	DAINRF			
101319166	DAINV1			
841800001073922	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
841800001073922	DAINRF			
101319255	DAINV1			
841901000153079	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
841800001073868	DAINRF			
101319201	DAINV1			
841901000153080	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
841800001073869	DAINRF			
841901000153128	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
841800001073924	DAINRF			
101319257	DAINV1			
841901000153113	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	4/19/2007 -
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101319241	DAINV1			

*Confirmation means: 1) Premise ID valid. 2) UAIN's assigned valid. 3) Traceback is as reported

FIG. 6D

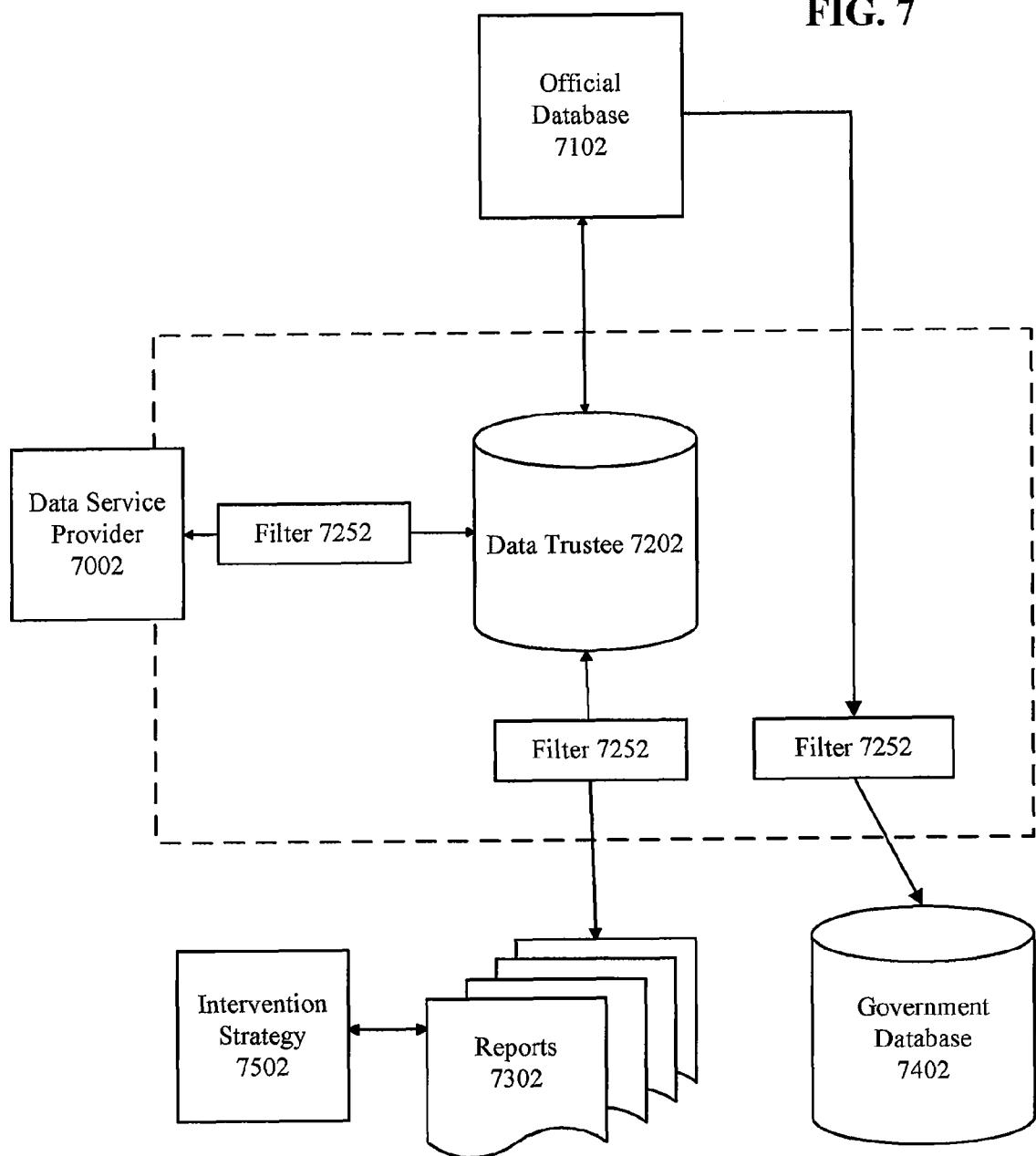
SLAUGHTERED Confirmation Report*

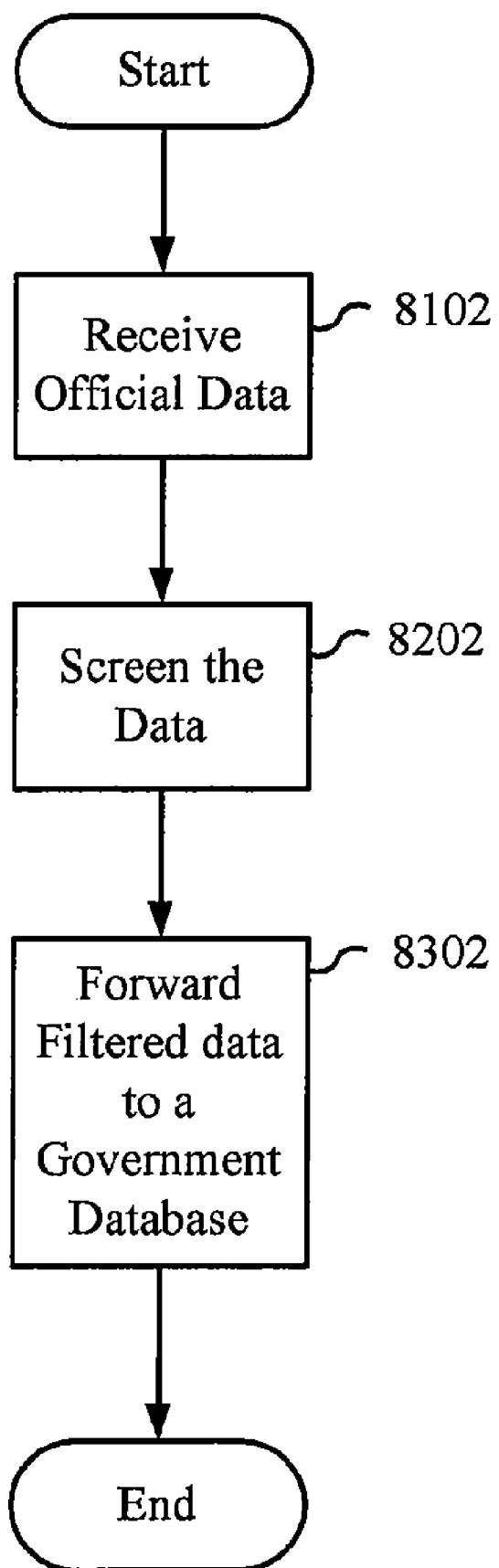
BIE Document Id FC55E30C08/0

Date of Event 04/03/07
 Source Premise P201668 Packer P201668
 Destination Premise P201668 Packer P201668
 Number of Animals 18 Confirmed – 0 Non Reconciled

Identifier	Type	Species	Premise	Dates at Premise
841901000102410	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
841800000790399	DAINRF		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
101035732	DAINV1		Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007
841901000102470	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
101035803	DAINV1		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
			Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007
841901000102468	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
101035800	DAINV1		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
			Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007
841901000102463	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
101035792	DAINV1		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
			Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007
841800000790430	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
841800000790430	DAINRF		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
101035763	DAINV1		Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007
841901000102449	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
841800000790445	DAINRF		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
			Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007
841901000102461	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
841800000790457	DAINRF		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
101035790	DAINV1		Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007
841800000790475	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
841800000790475	DAINRF		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
101035808	DAINV1		Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007
841800000790423	UAIN	Bovine	Confirmed	12/28/2005 – 07/29/2006
841800000790423	DAINRF		Confirmed	07/30/2006 – 07/31/2006
			Confirmed	08/01/2006 – 04/03/2007
			Confirmed	04/03/2007 – 04/03/2007

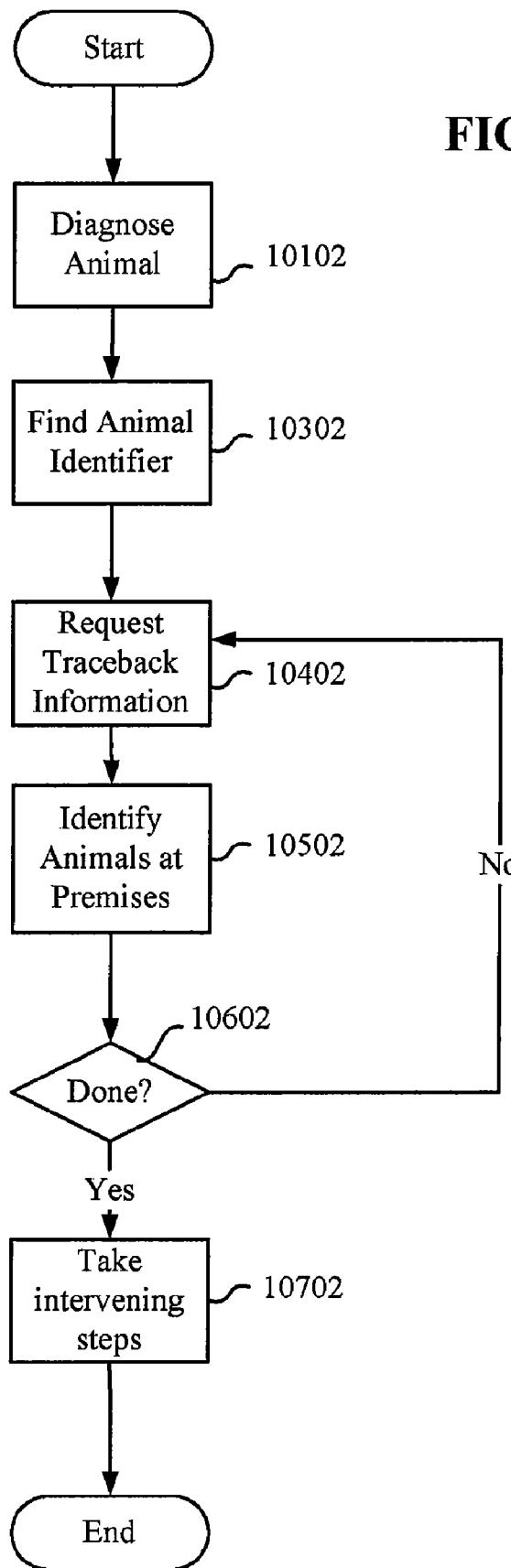
*Confirmation means: 1) Premise ID valid. 2) UAIN's assigned valid. 3) Traceback is as reported

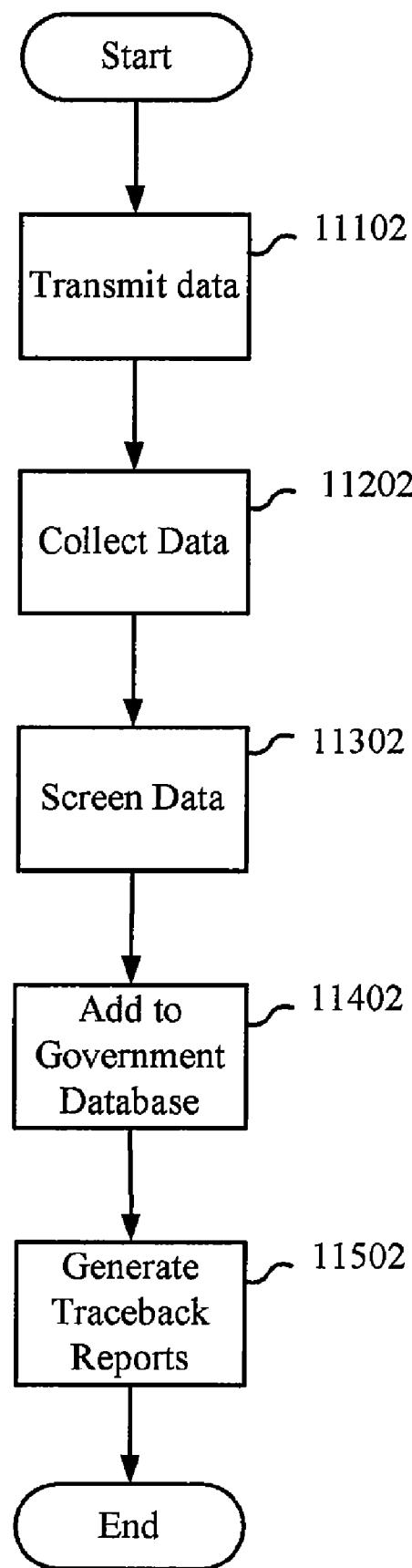
FIG. 7

**FIG. 8**

Animal Tracking Animal identifier - 123 456 789 012 345		
Date	Premise	
01-12-05	AB12345	Tag is allocated to premises
03-15-05	AB12345	Sighting
07-16-05	GHI90JK	Movement in
09-08-05	GHI90JK	Sighting
12-20-05	GHI90JK	Movement out
01-01-06	T789UVW	Movement in
12-25-09	T789UVW	Slaughtered

FIG. 9

**FIG. 10**

**FIG. 11**

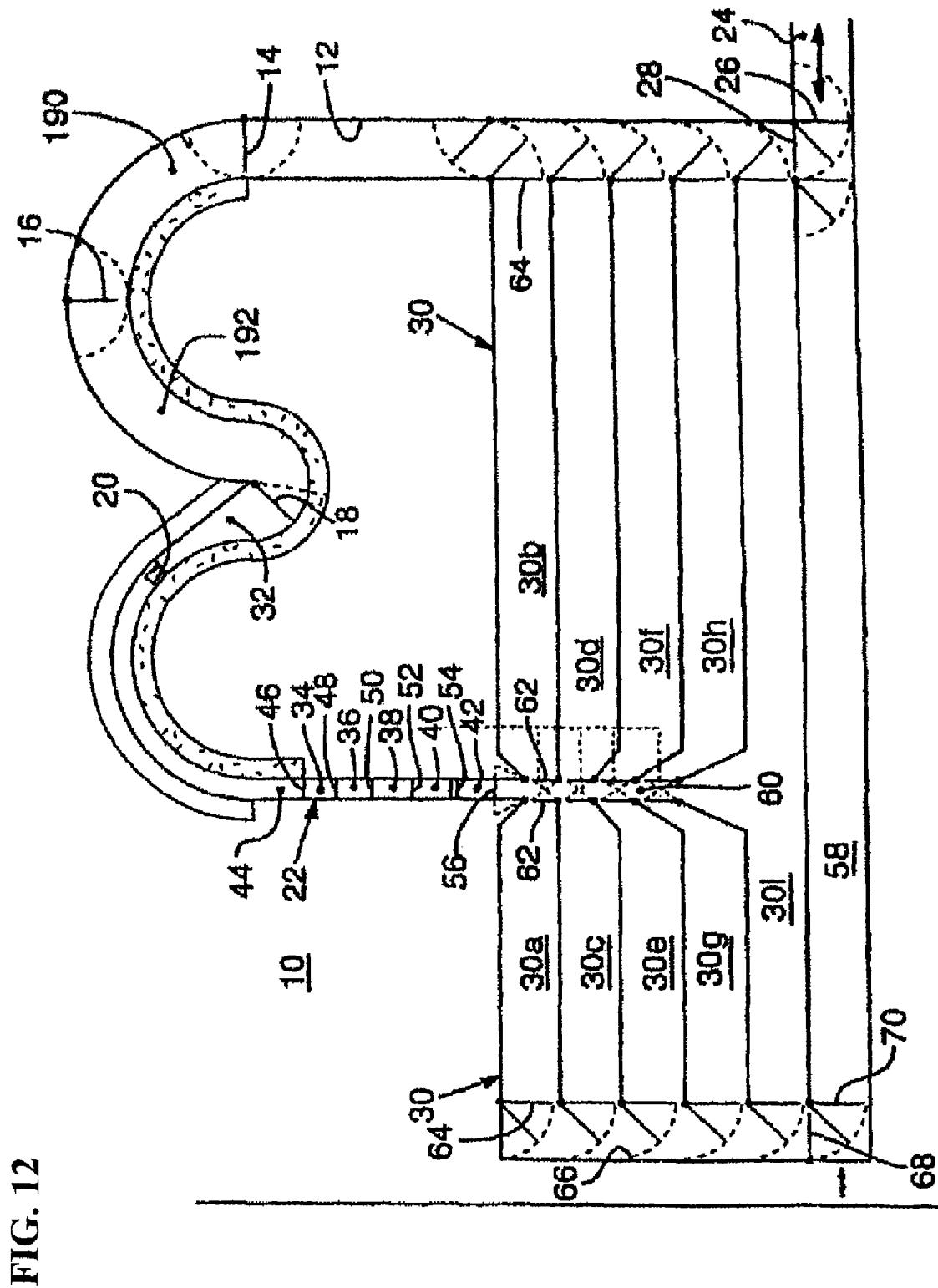
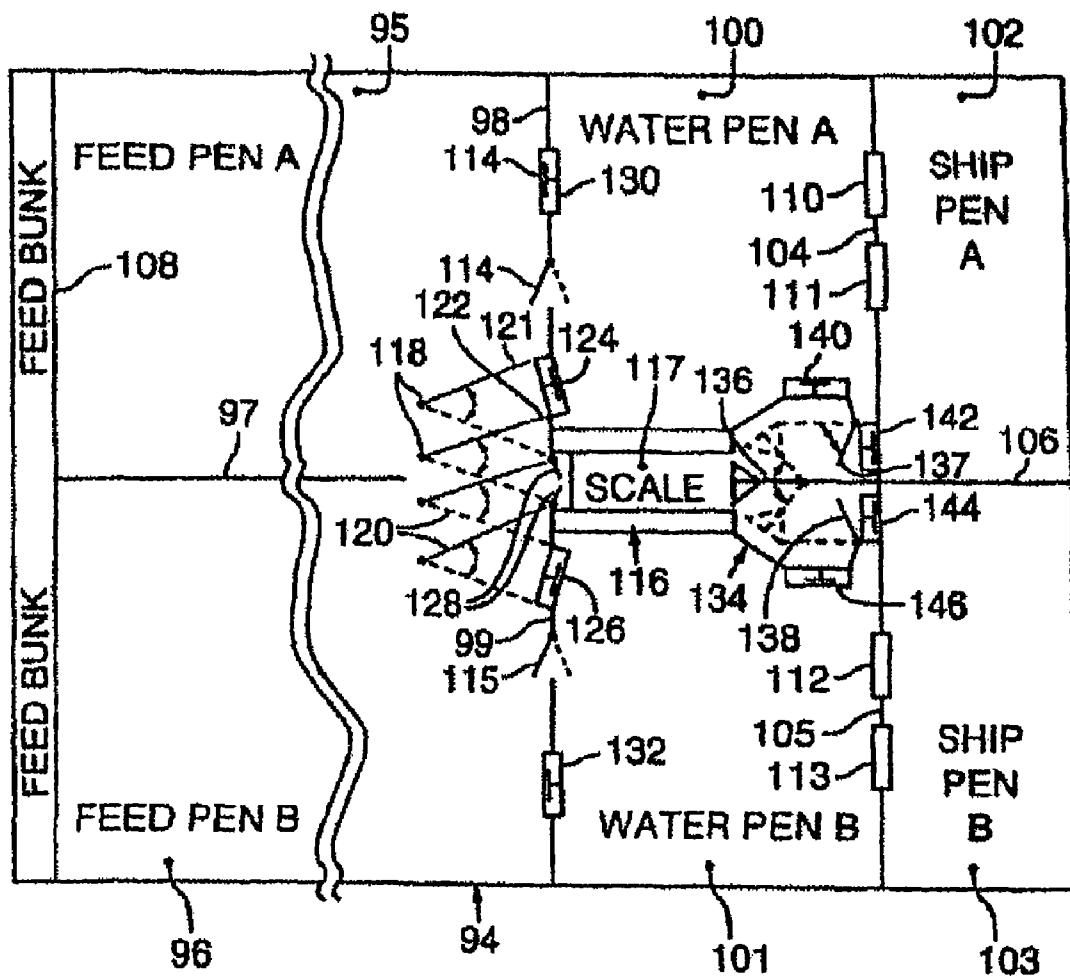


FIG. 12

FIG. 13

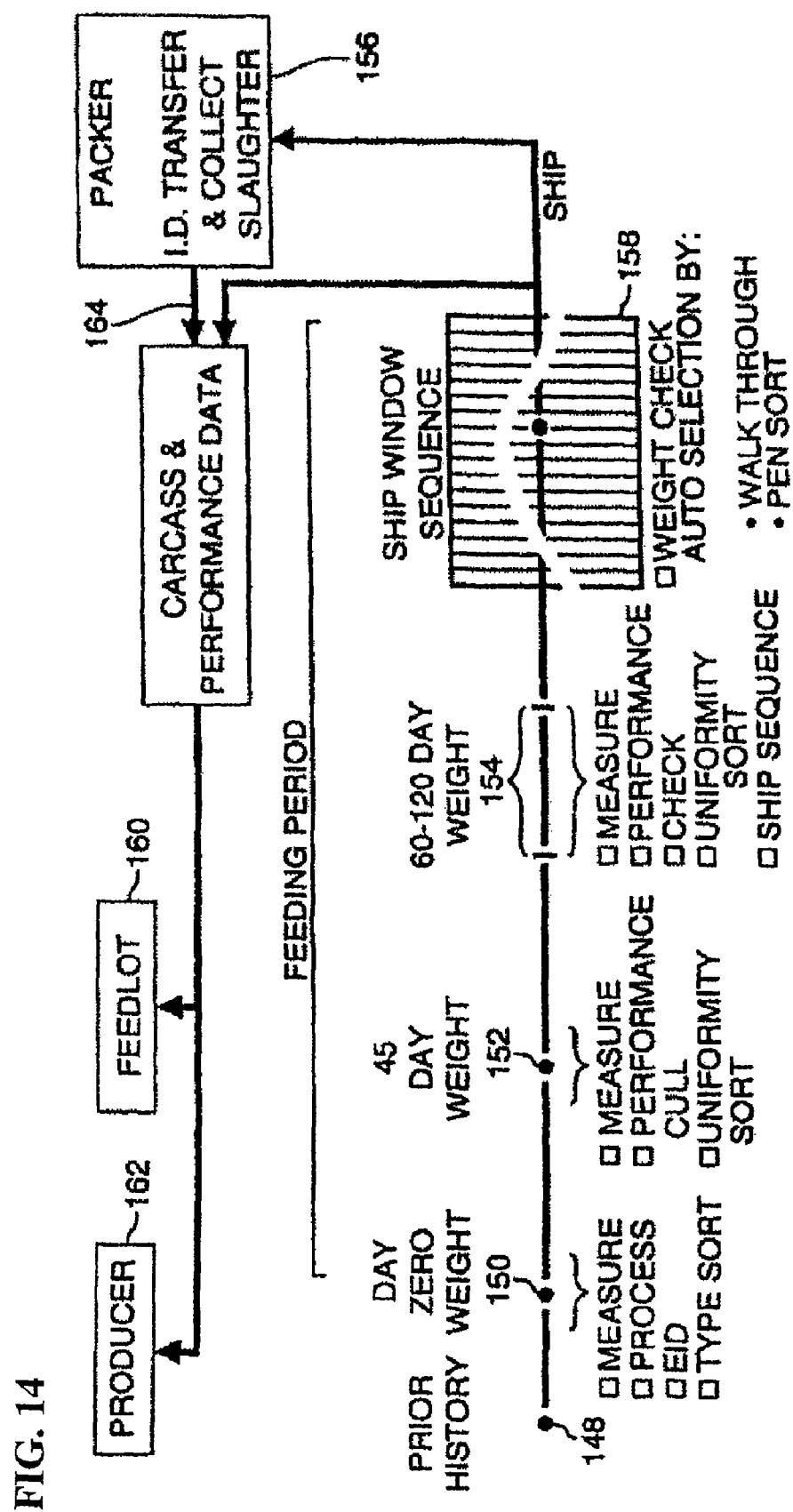


FIG. 15A

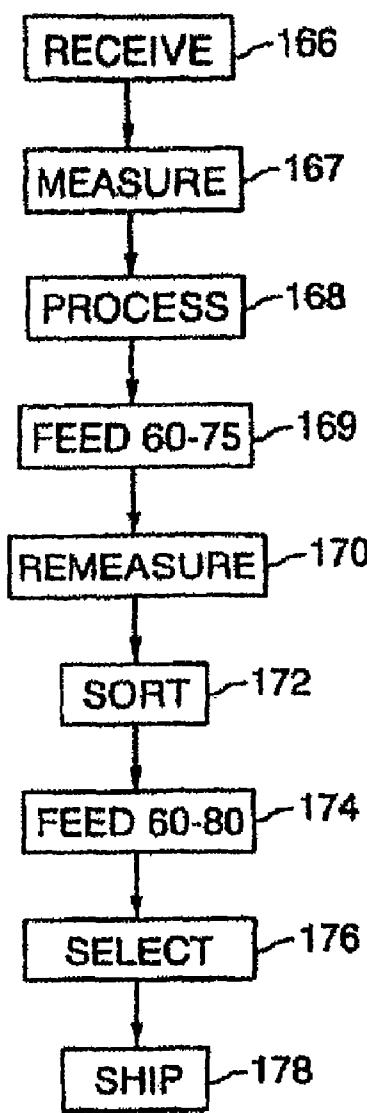


FIG. 15B

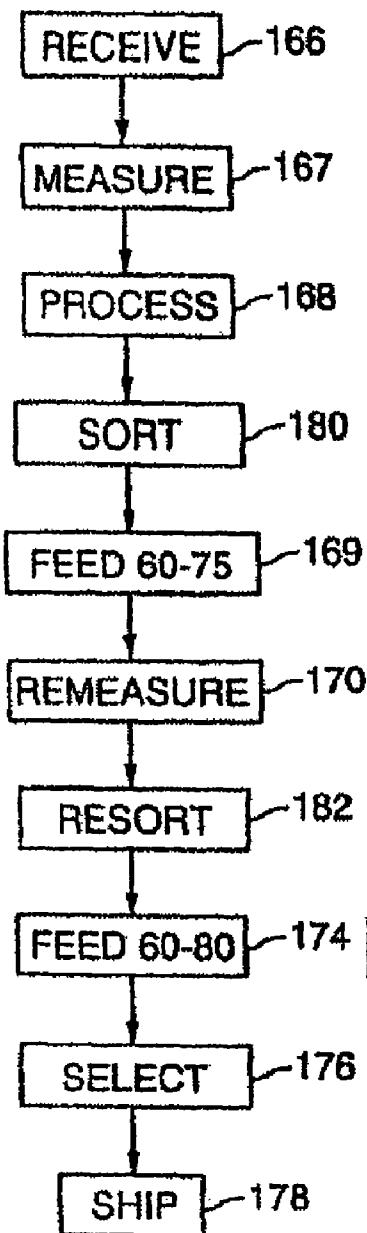


FIG. 15C

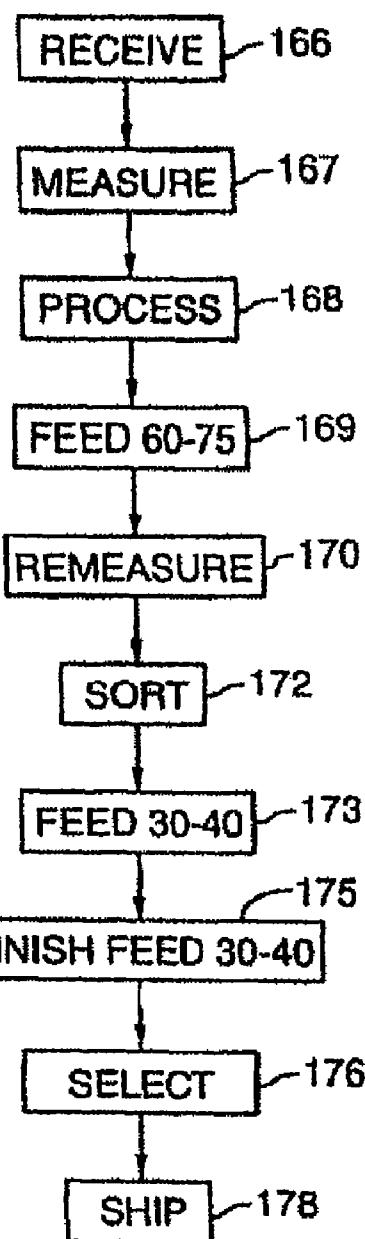


FIG. 16

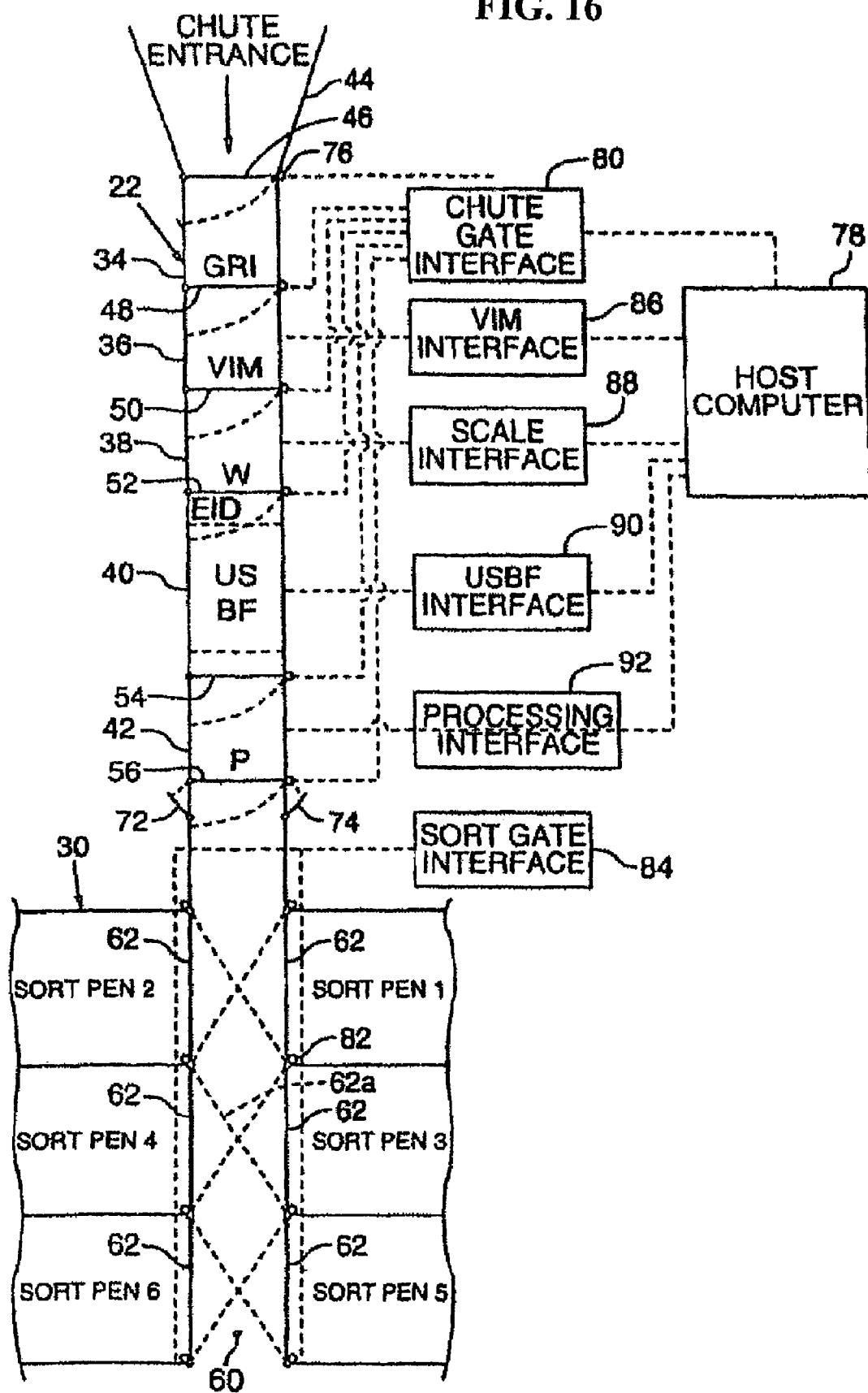


FIG. 17

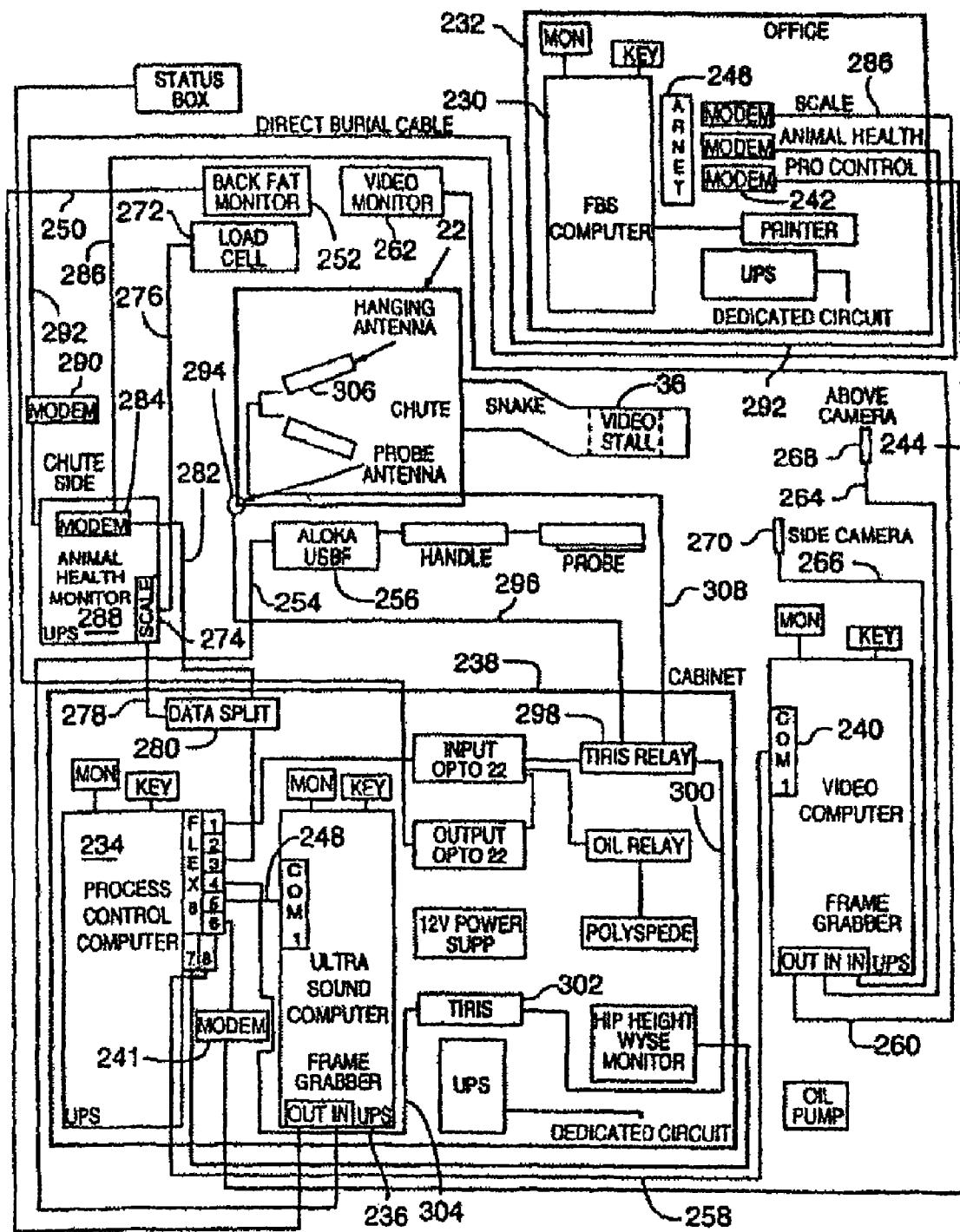


FIG. 18

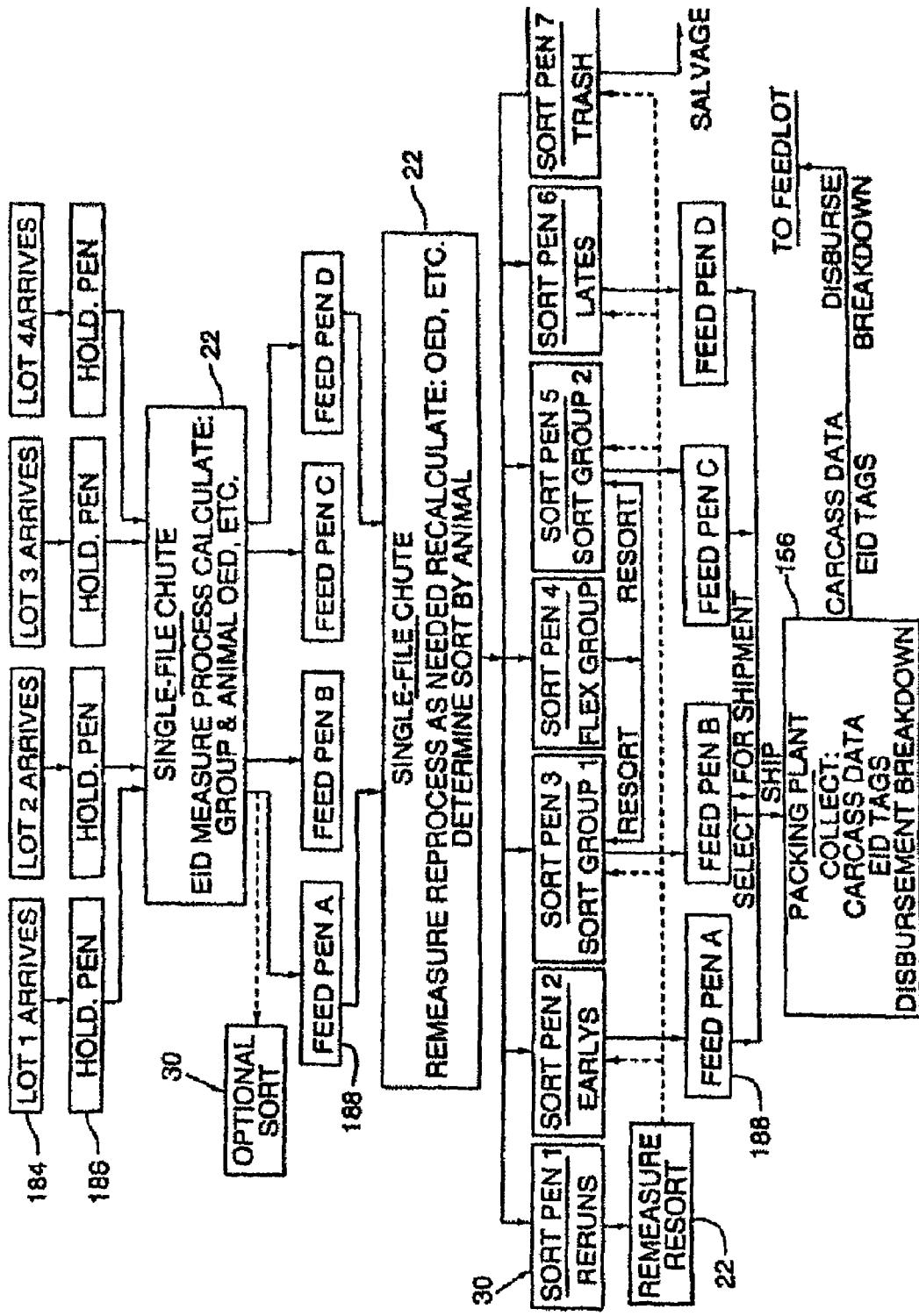


FIG. 19

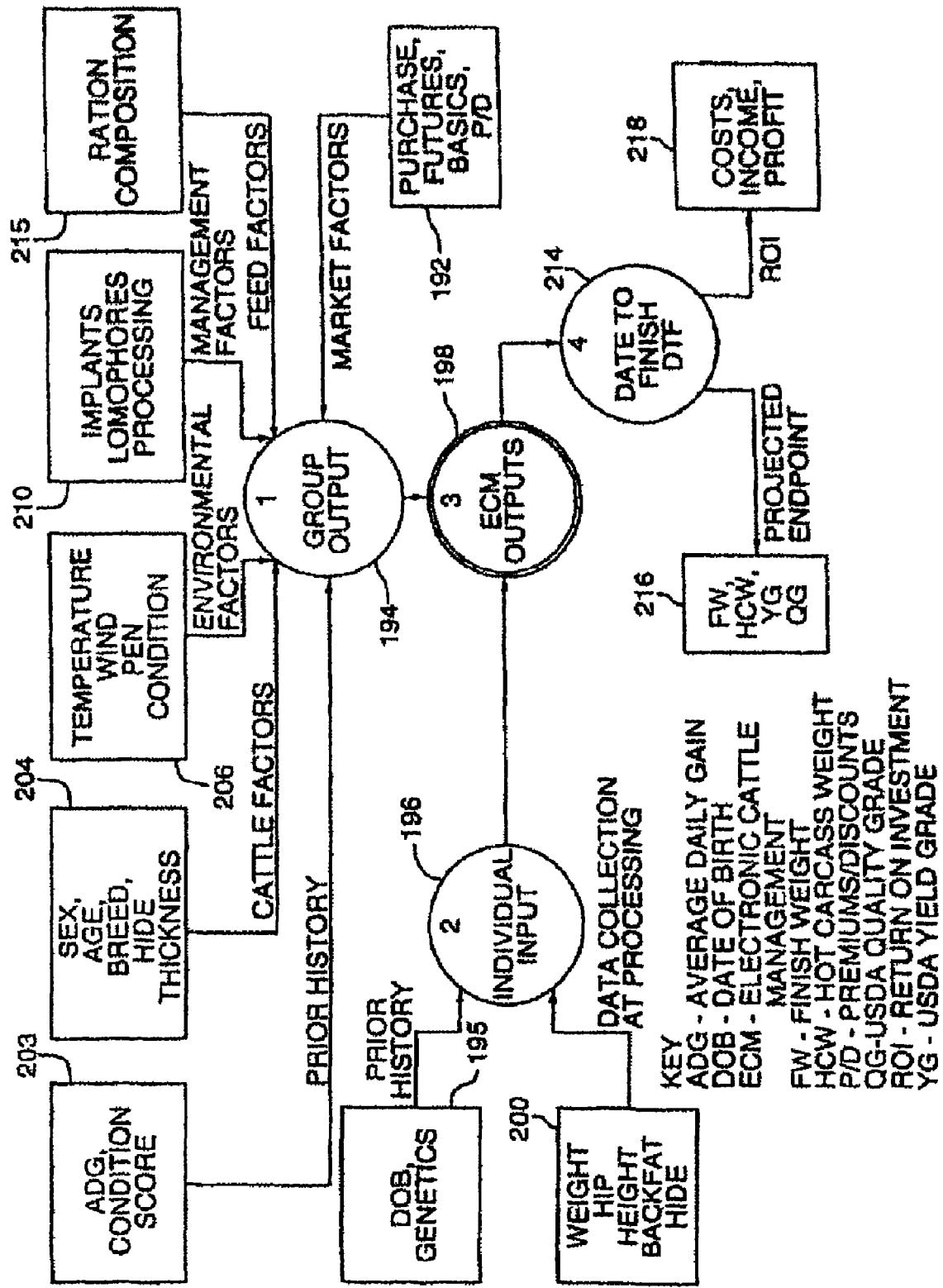


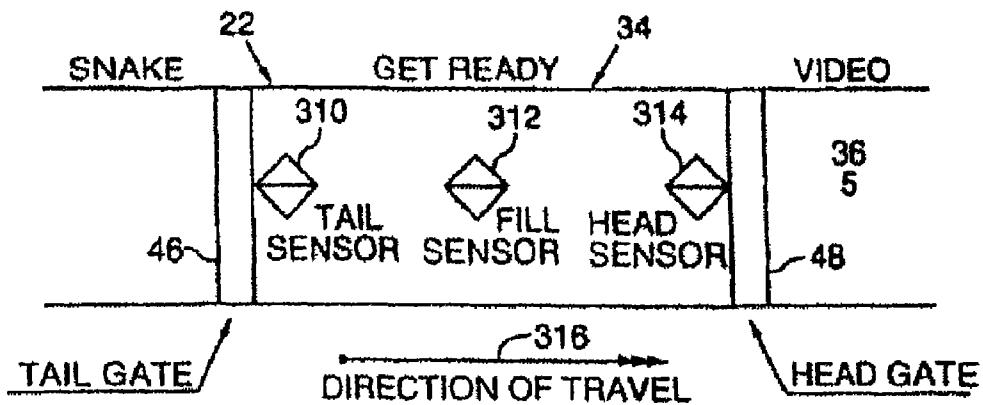
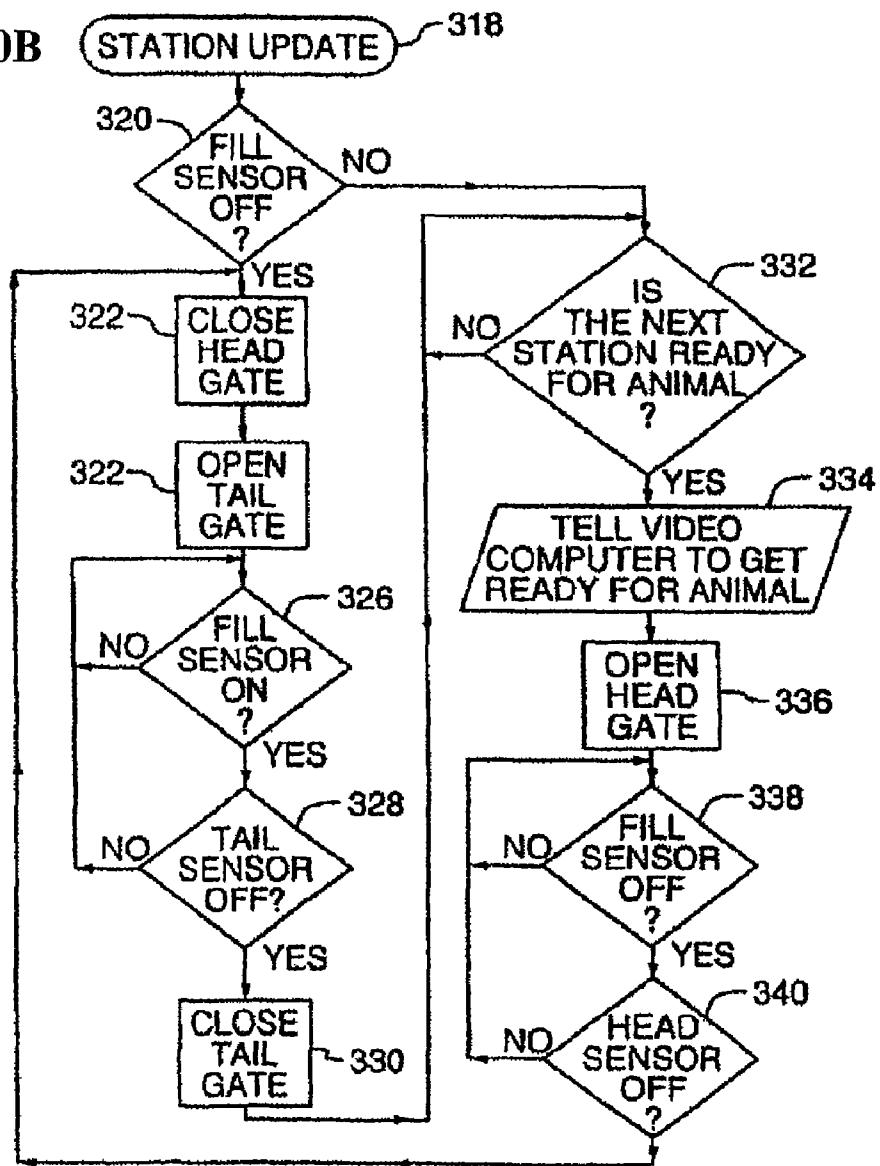
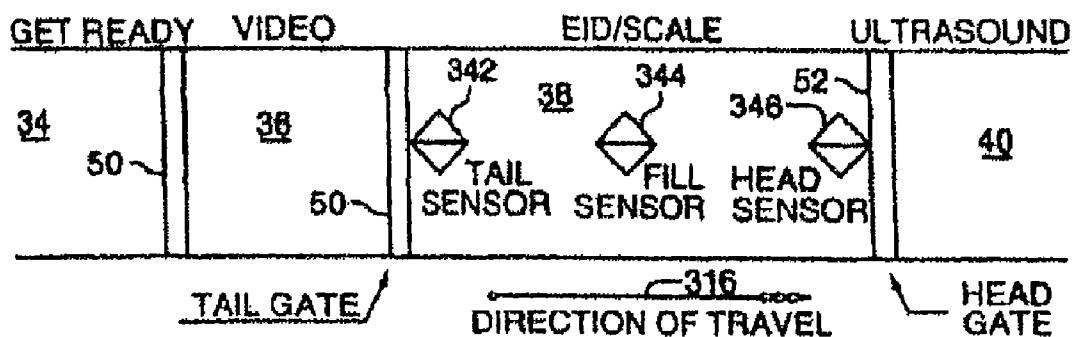
FIG. 20A**FIG. 20B**

FIG. 21A



SCALE/EID STATION 348

FIG. 21B

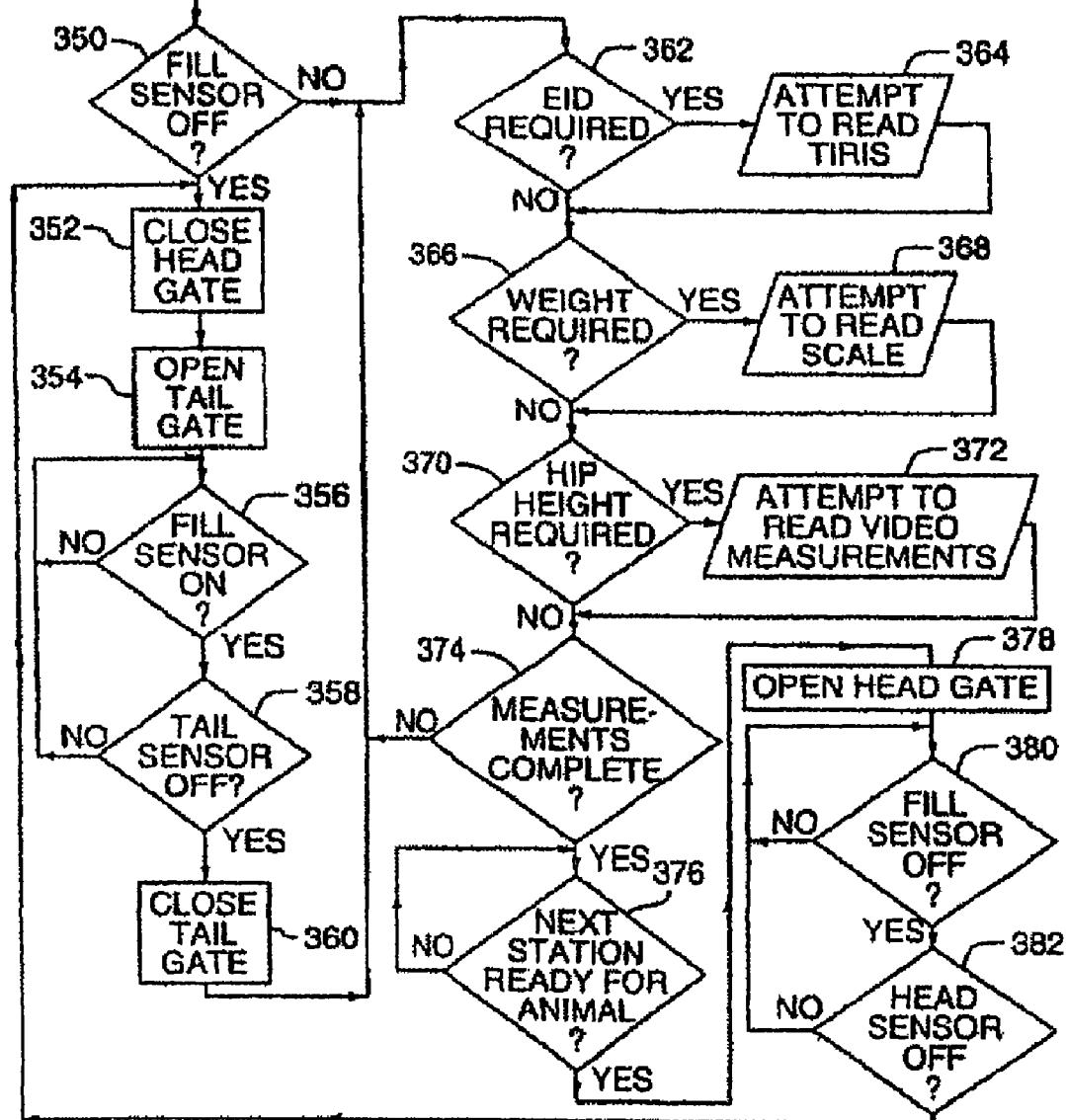


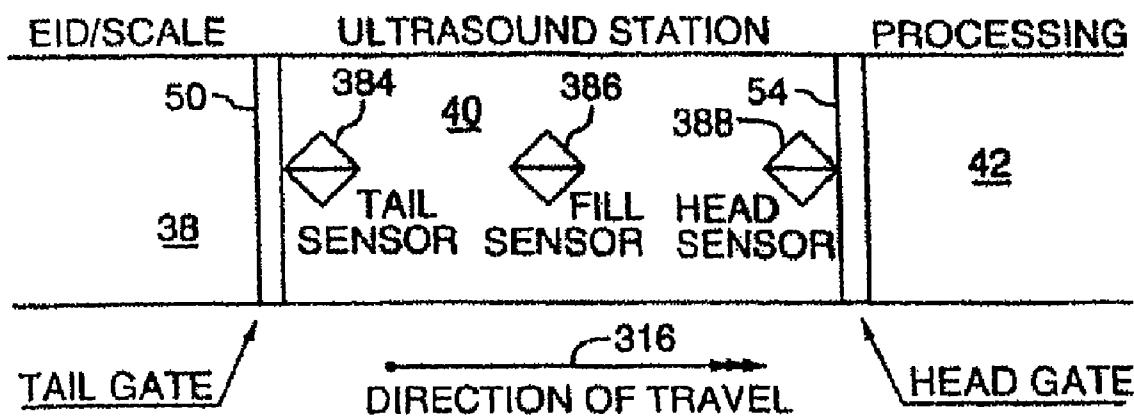
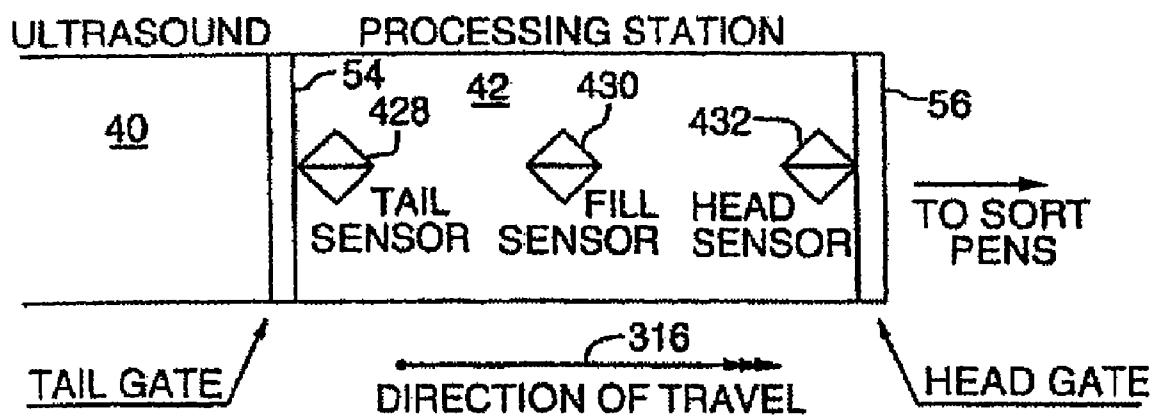
FIG. 22A**FIG. 23A**

FIG. 22B

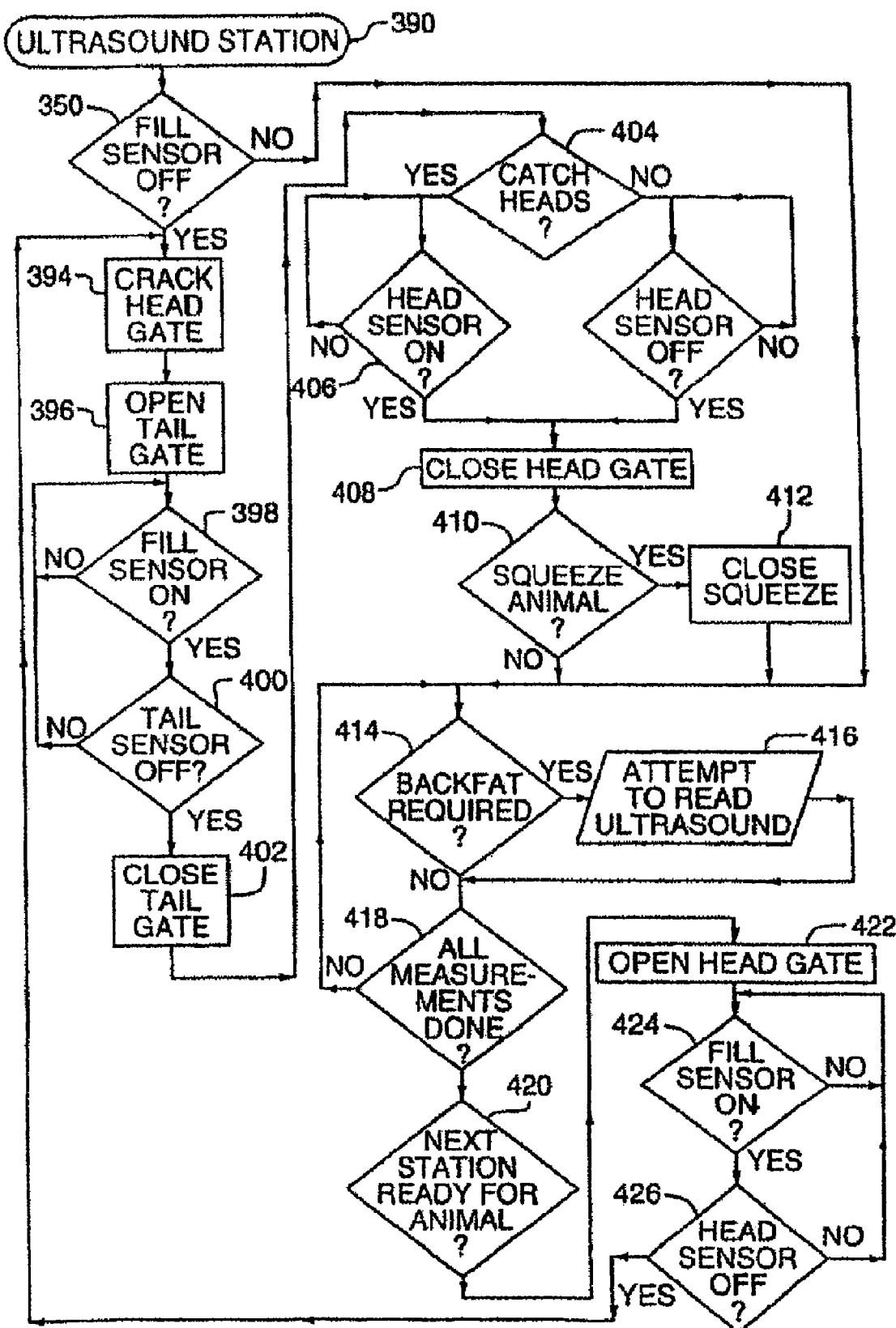


FIG. 23B

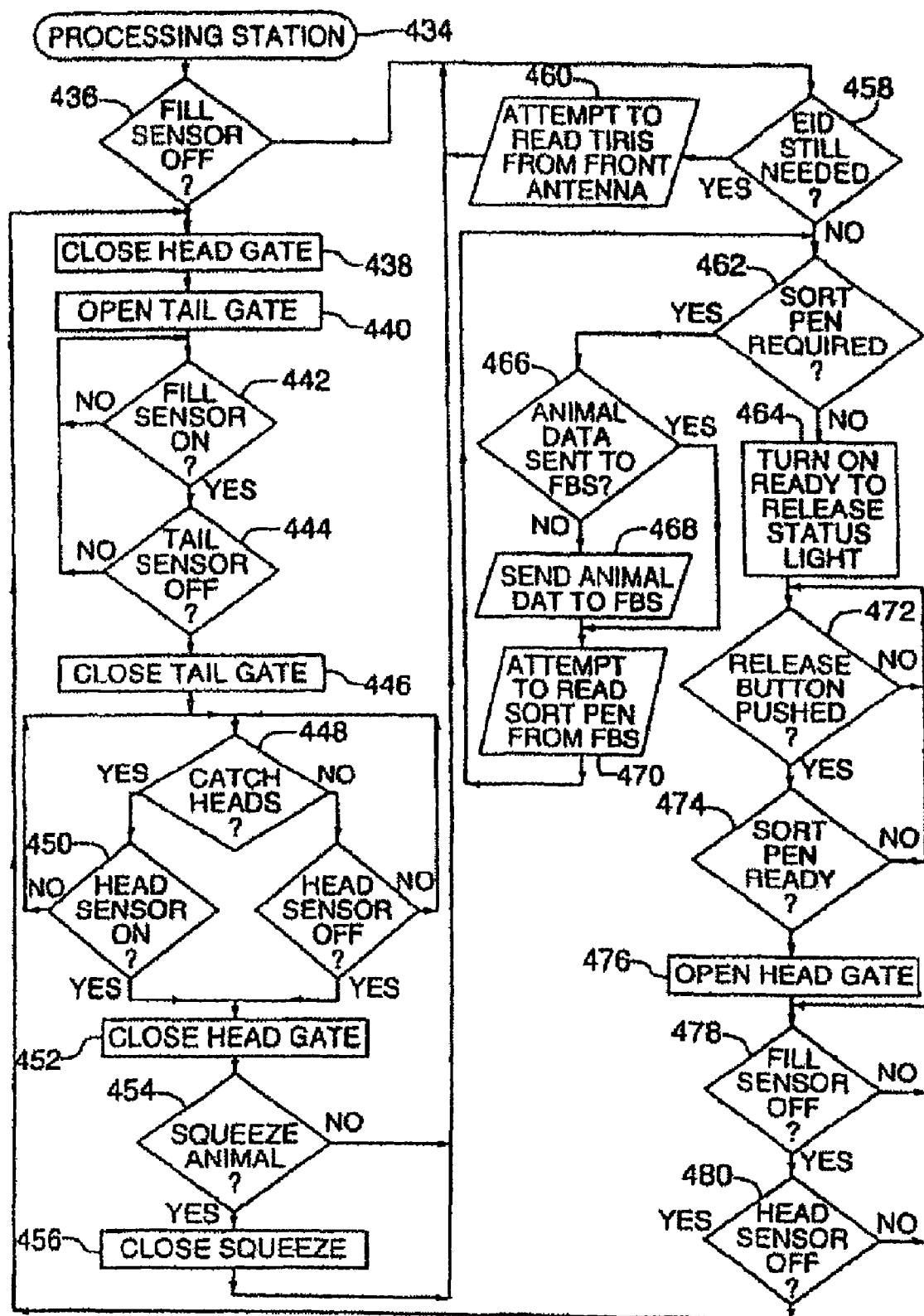


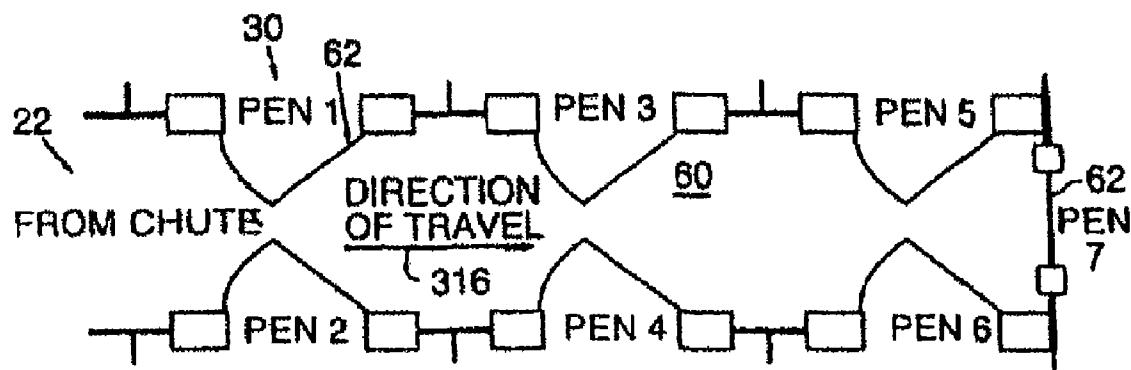
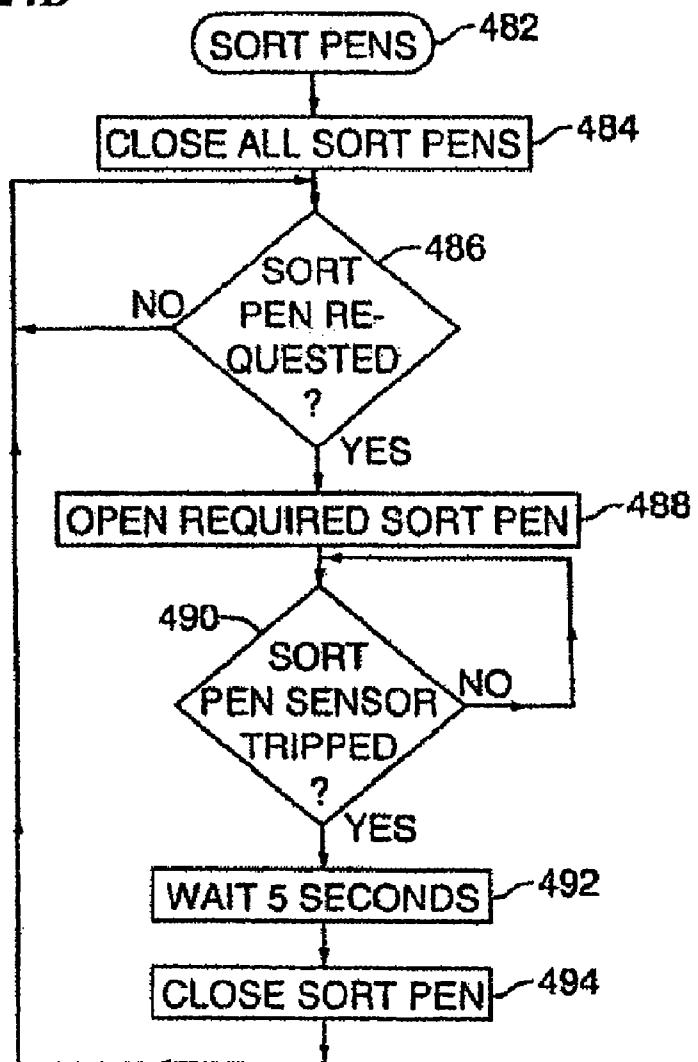
FIG. 24A**FIG. 24B**

FIG. 25A

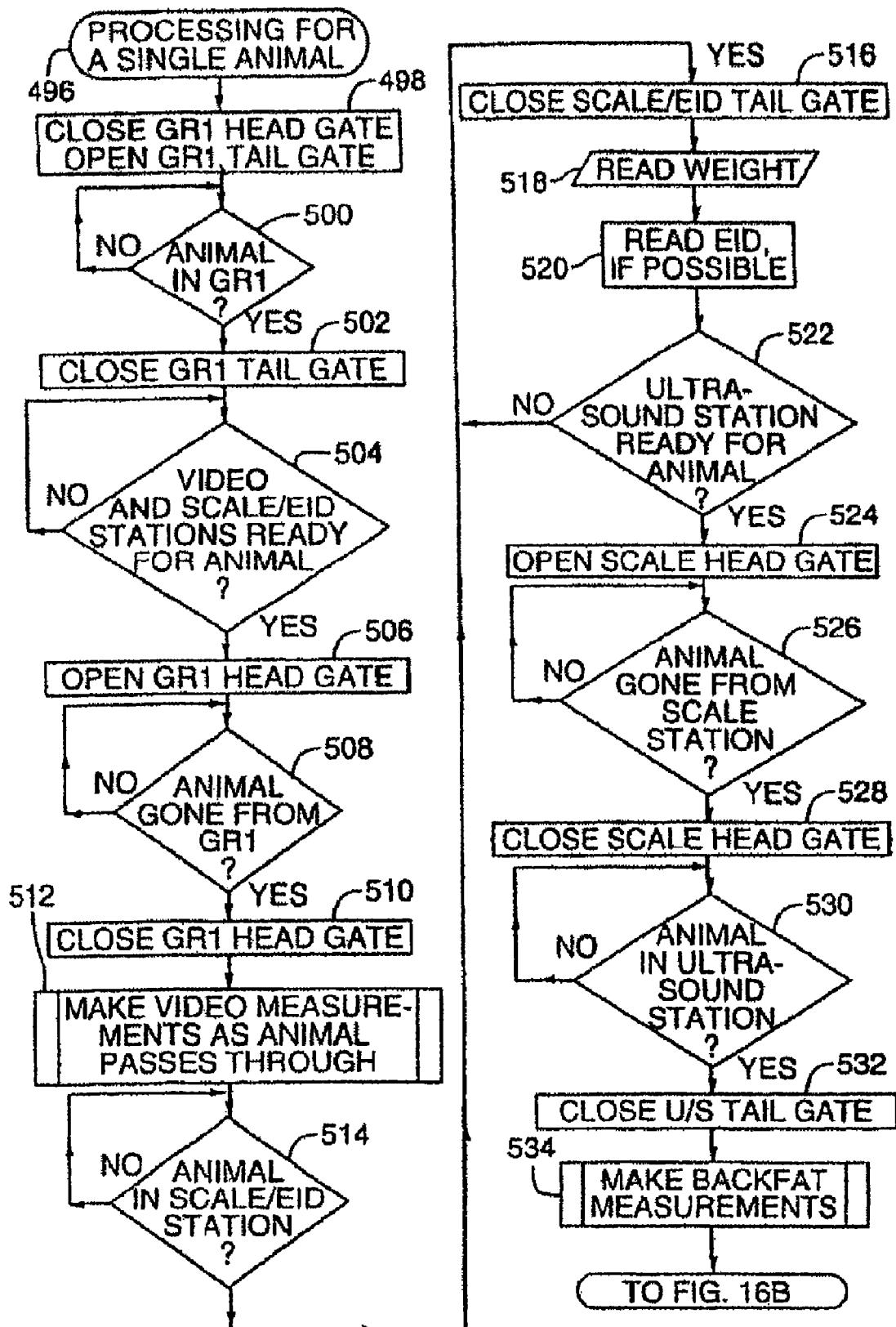


FIG. 25B

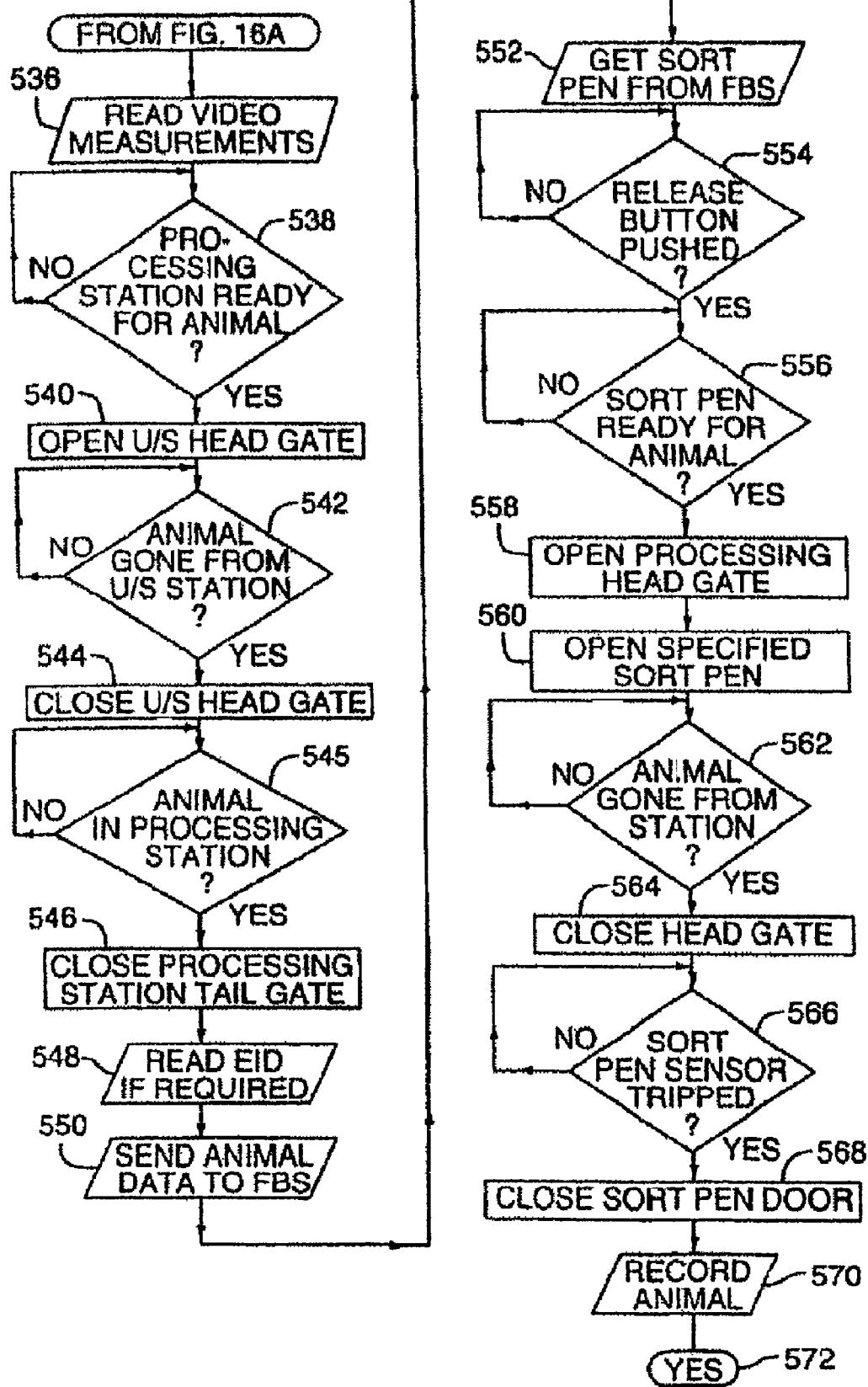


FIG. 26

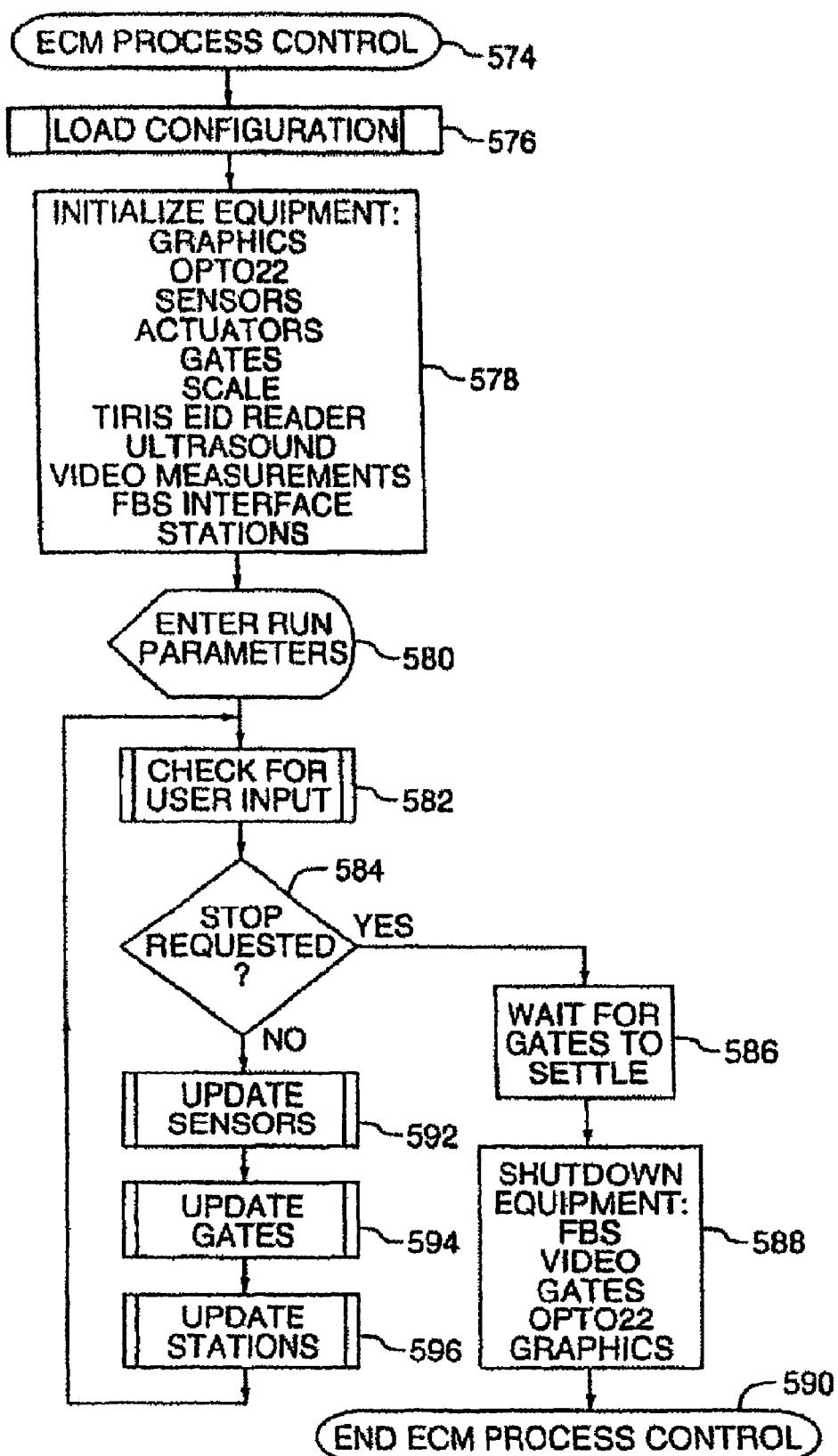


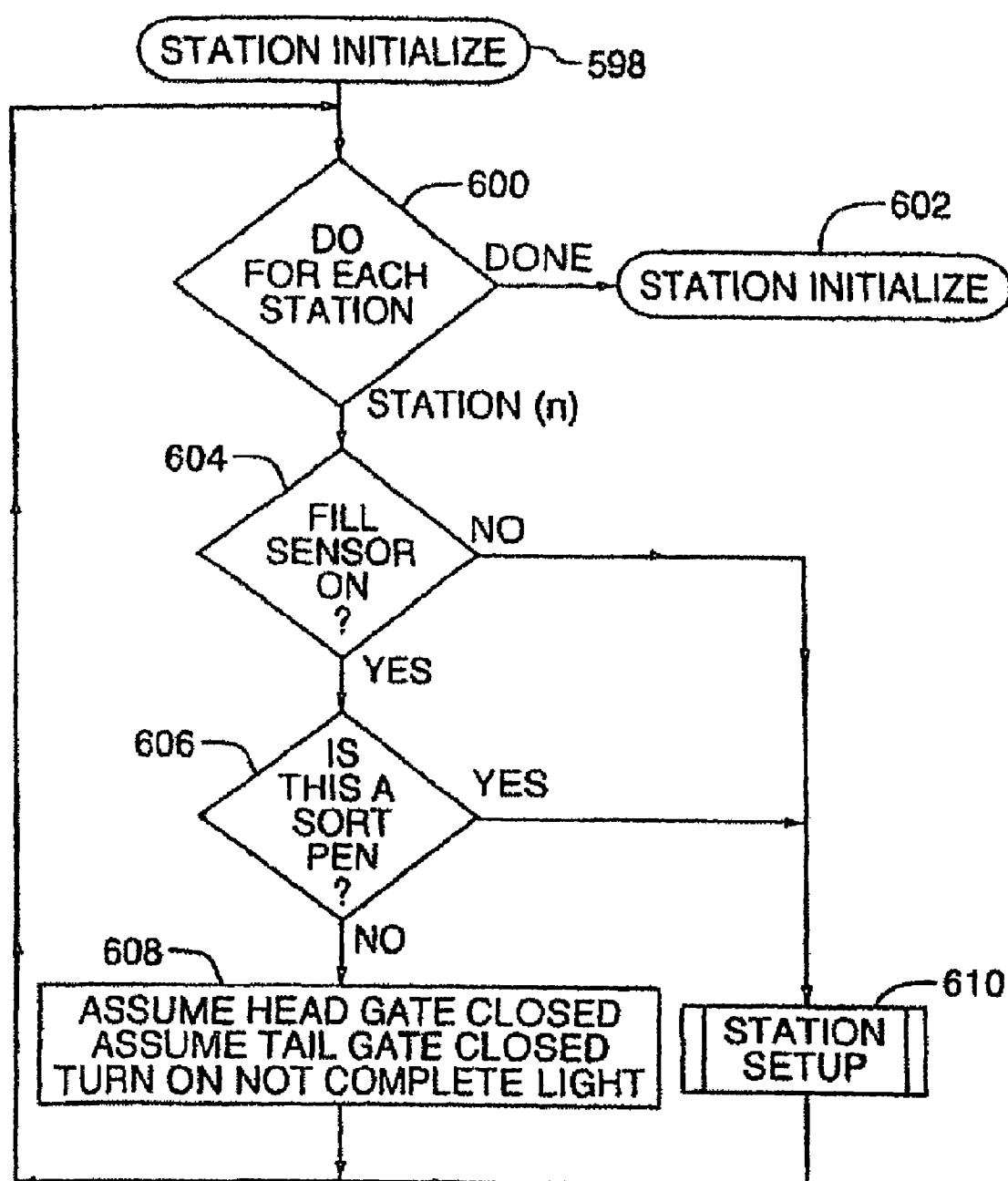
FIG. 27

FIG. 28

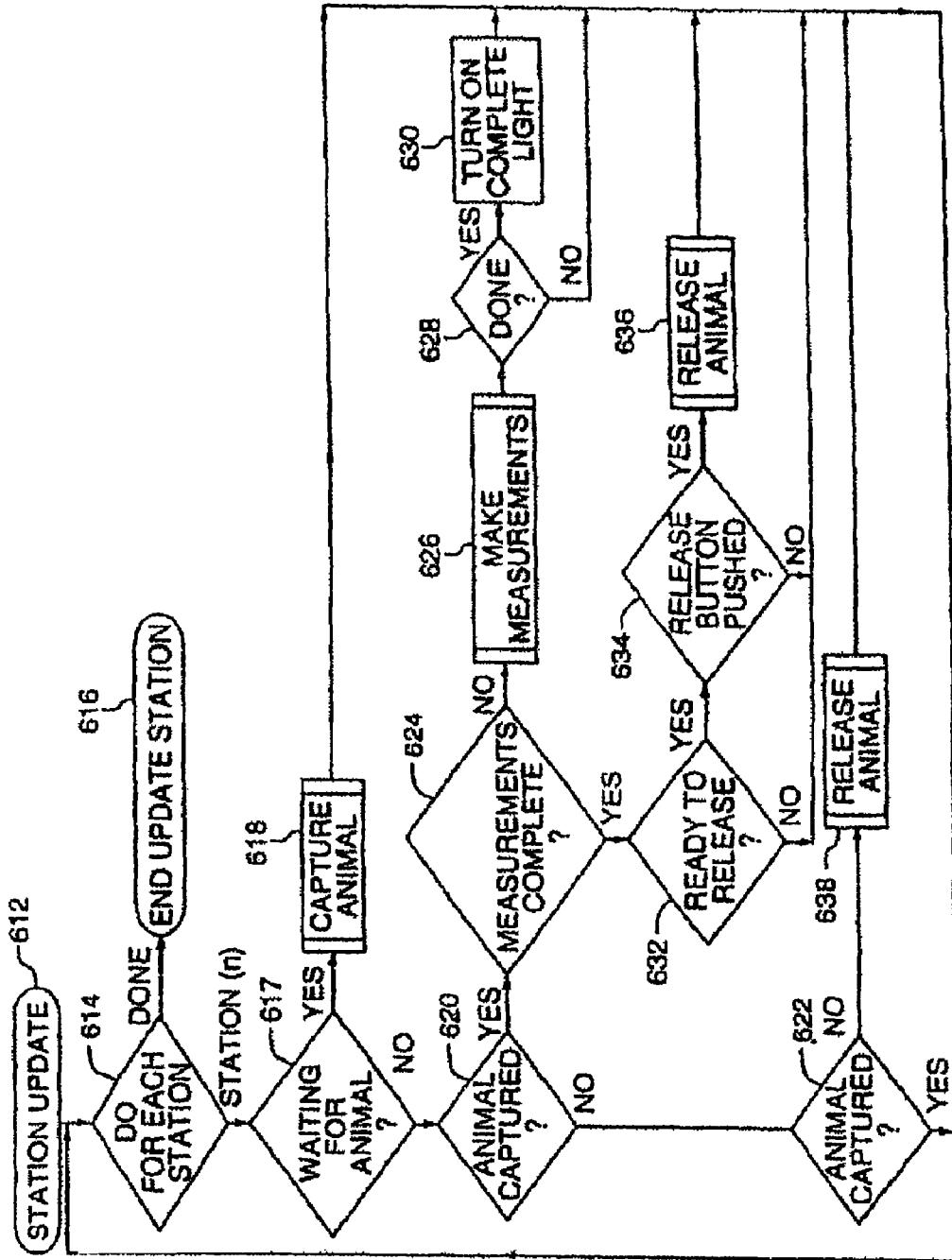


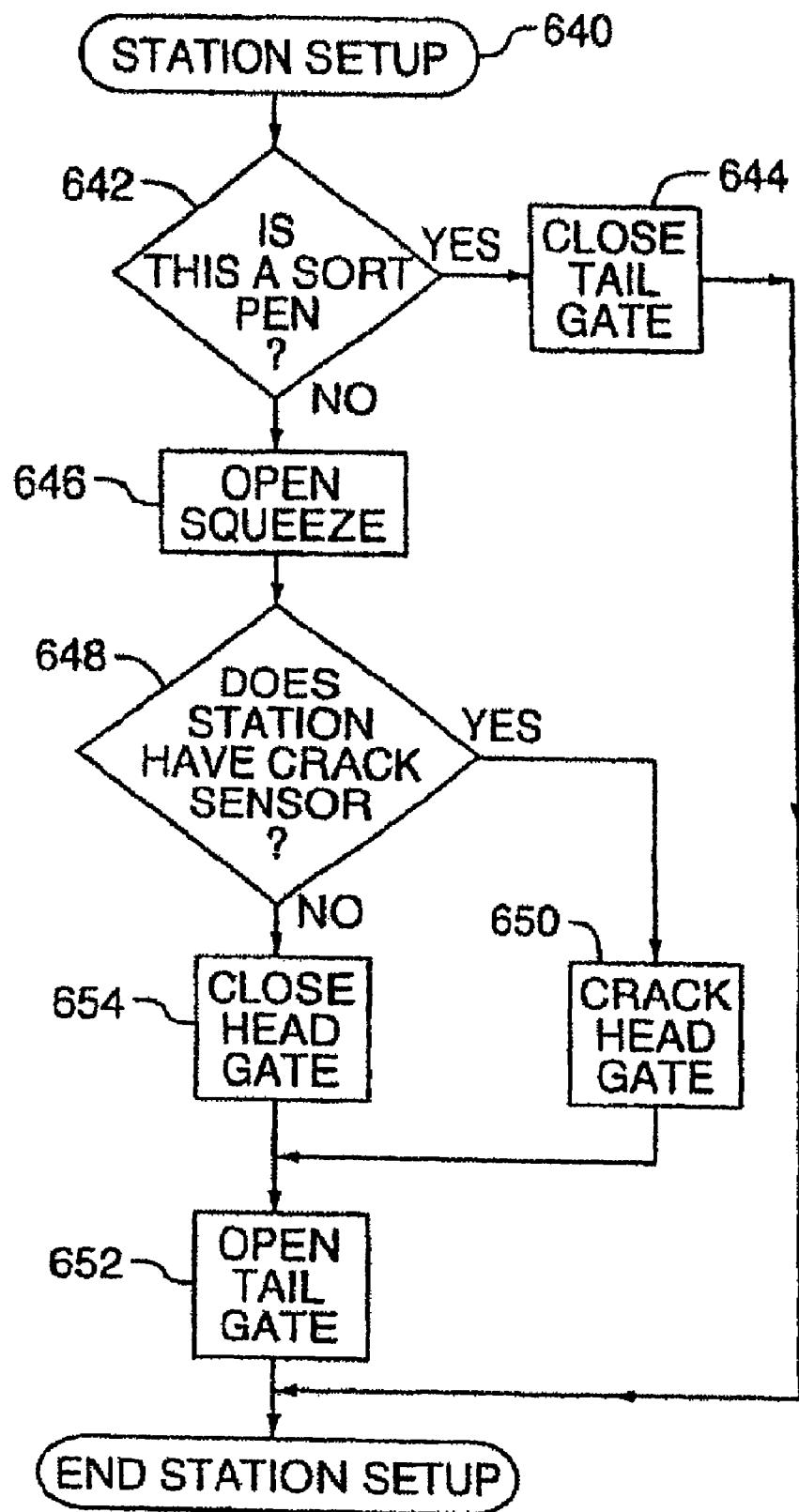
FIG. 29

FIG. 30

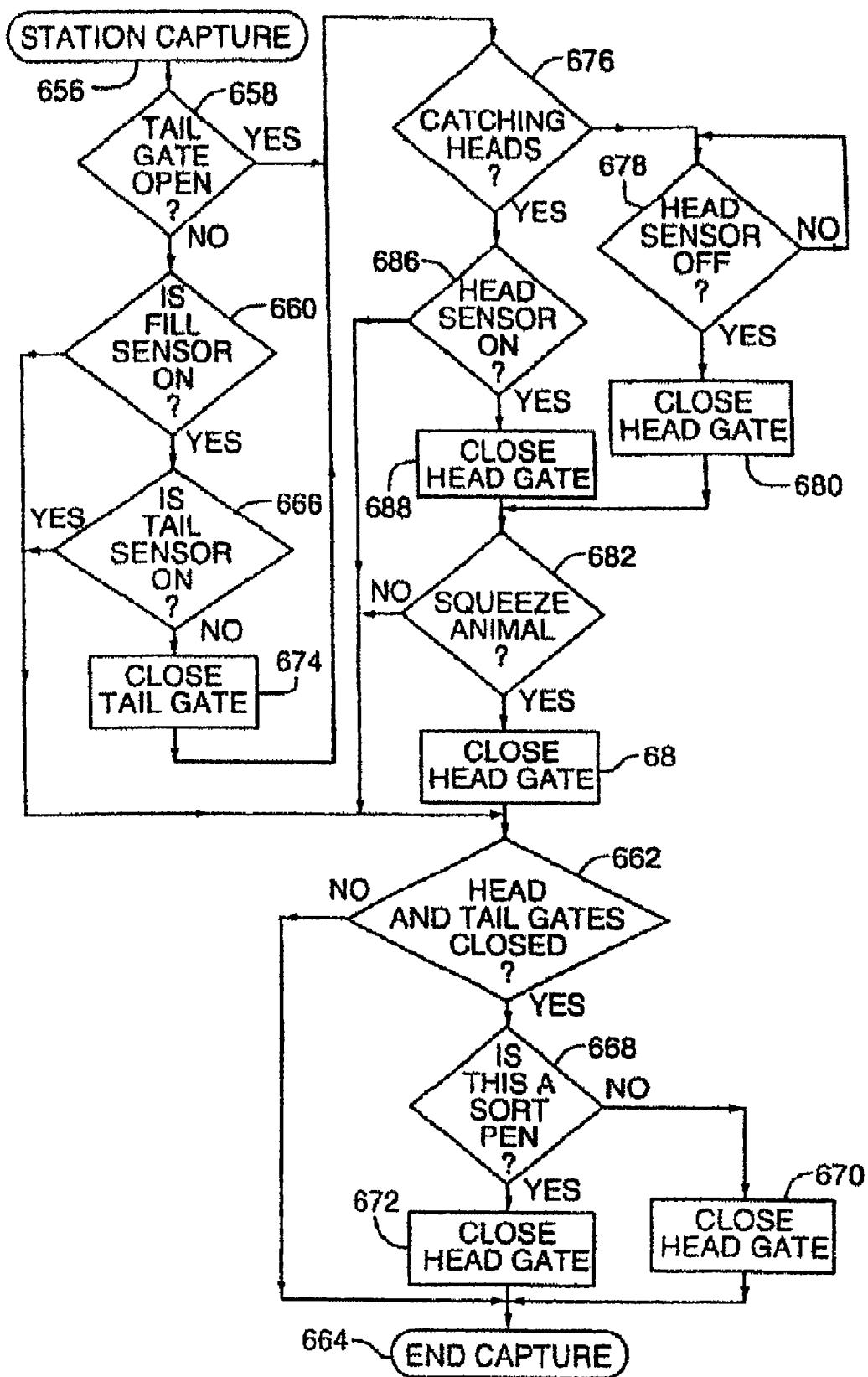


FIG. 31A

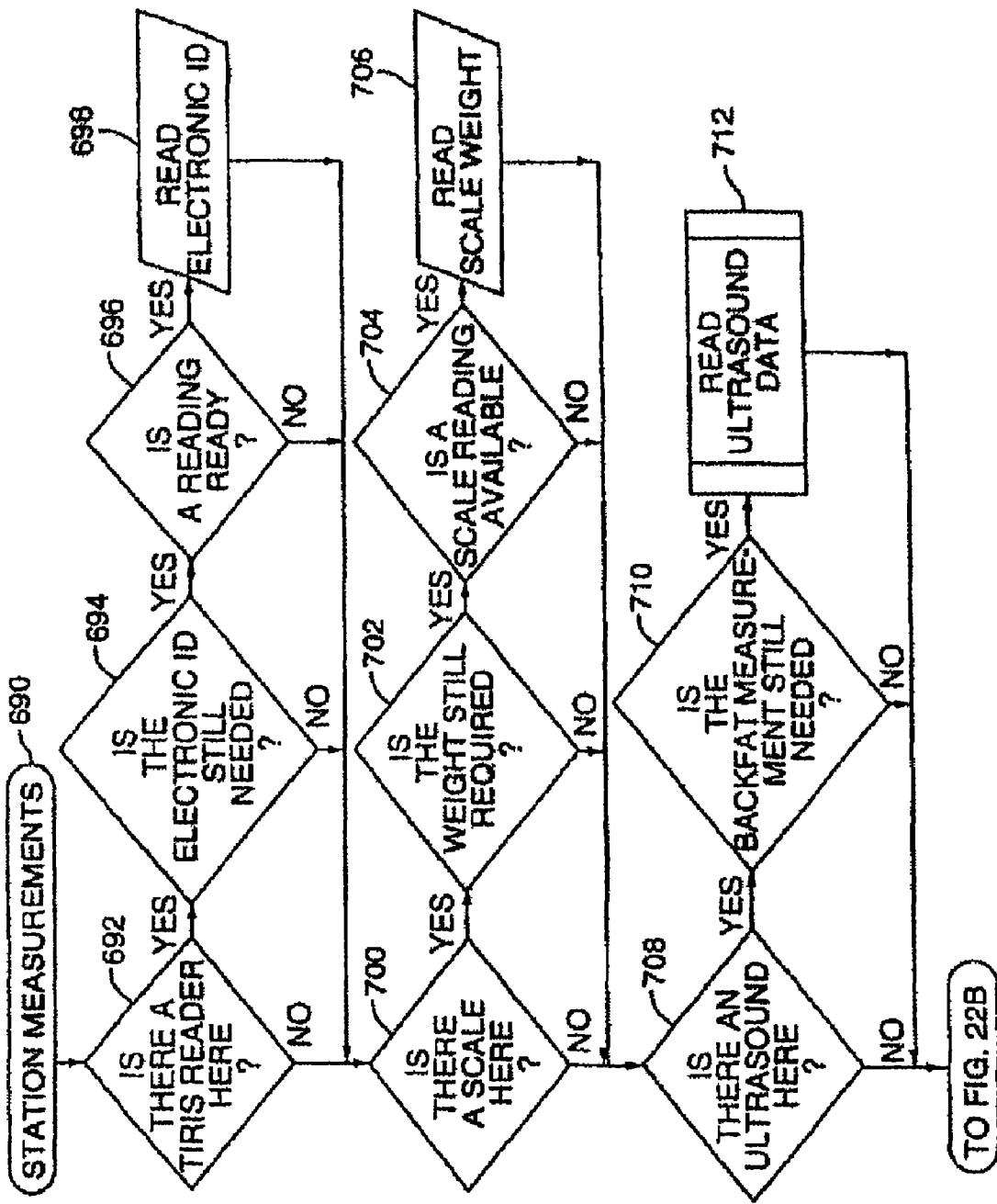


FIG. 31B

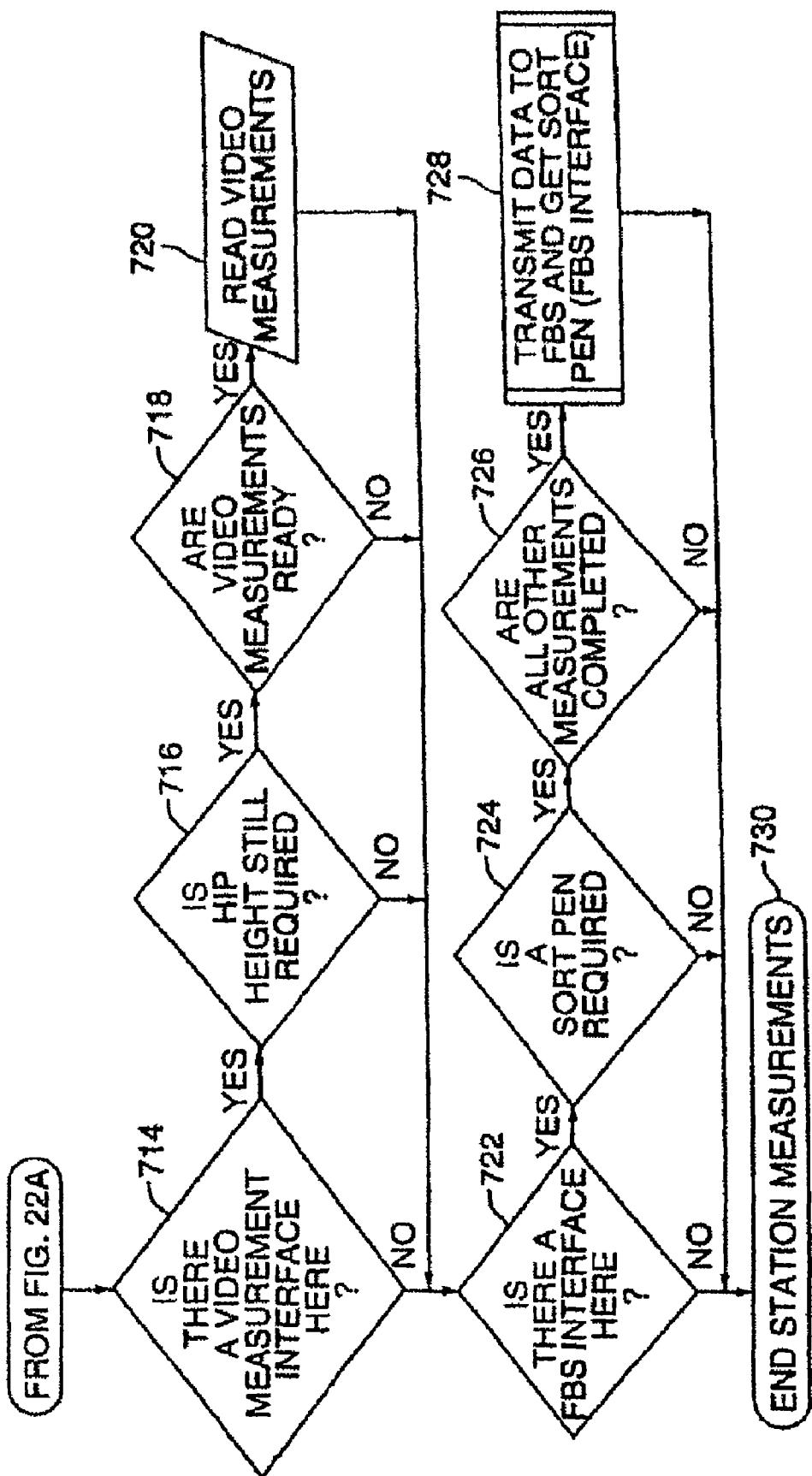


FIG. 32

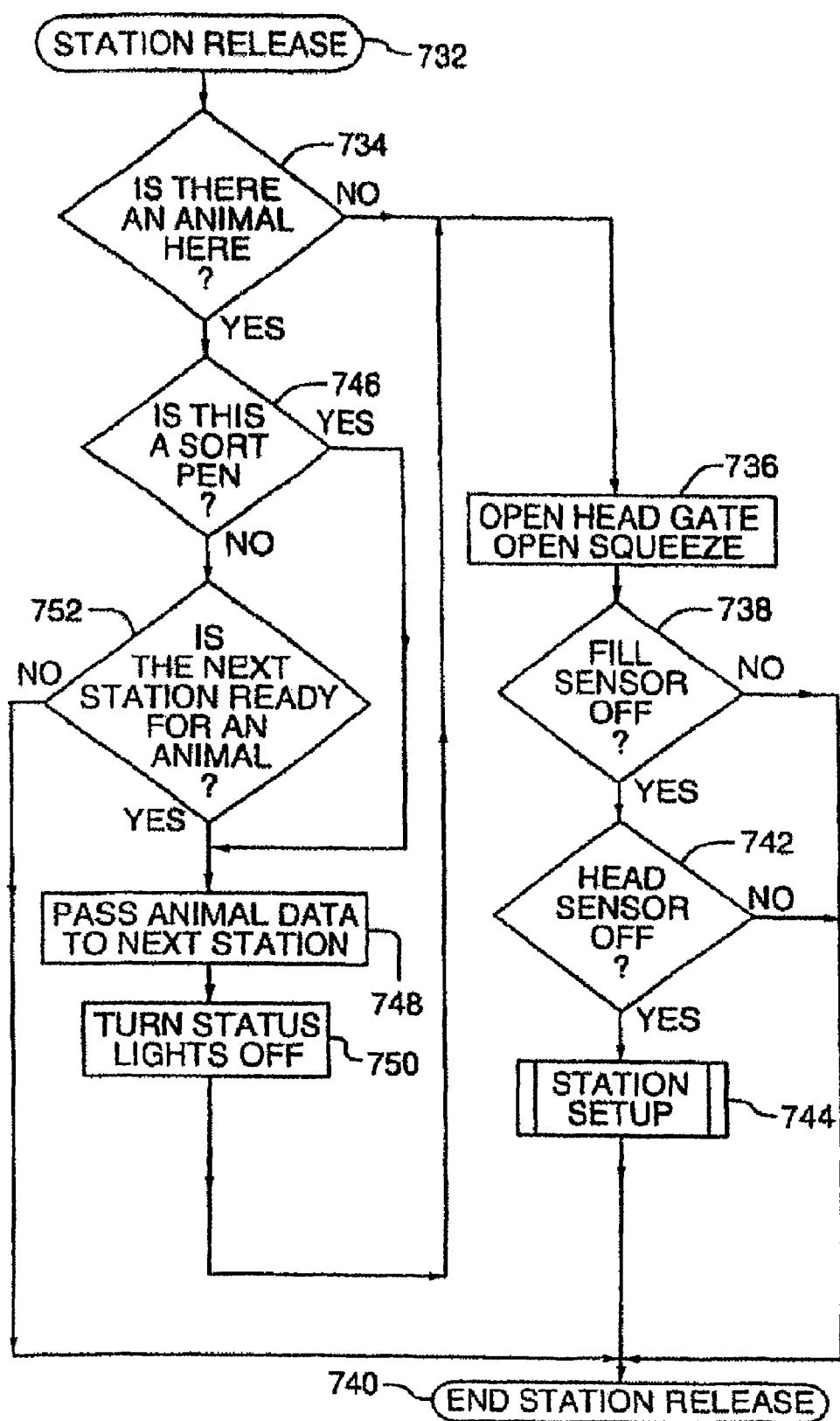


FIG. 33

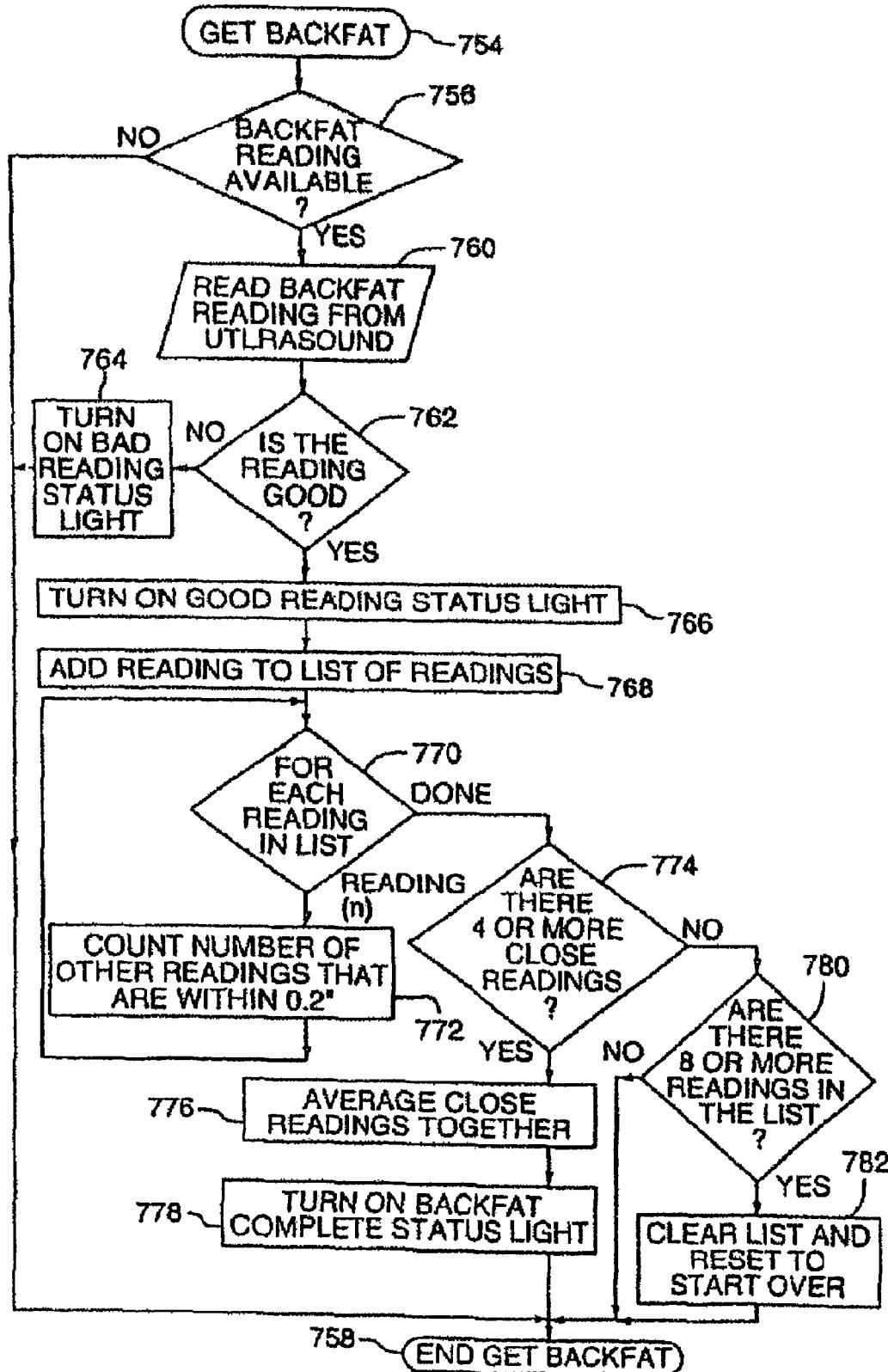


FIG. 34

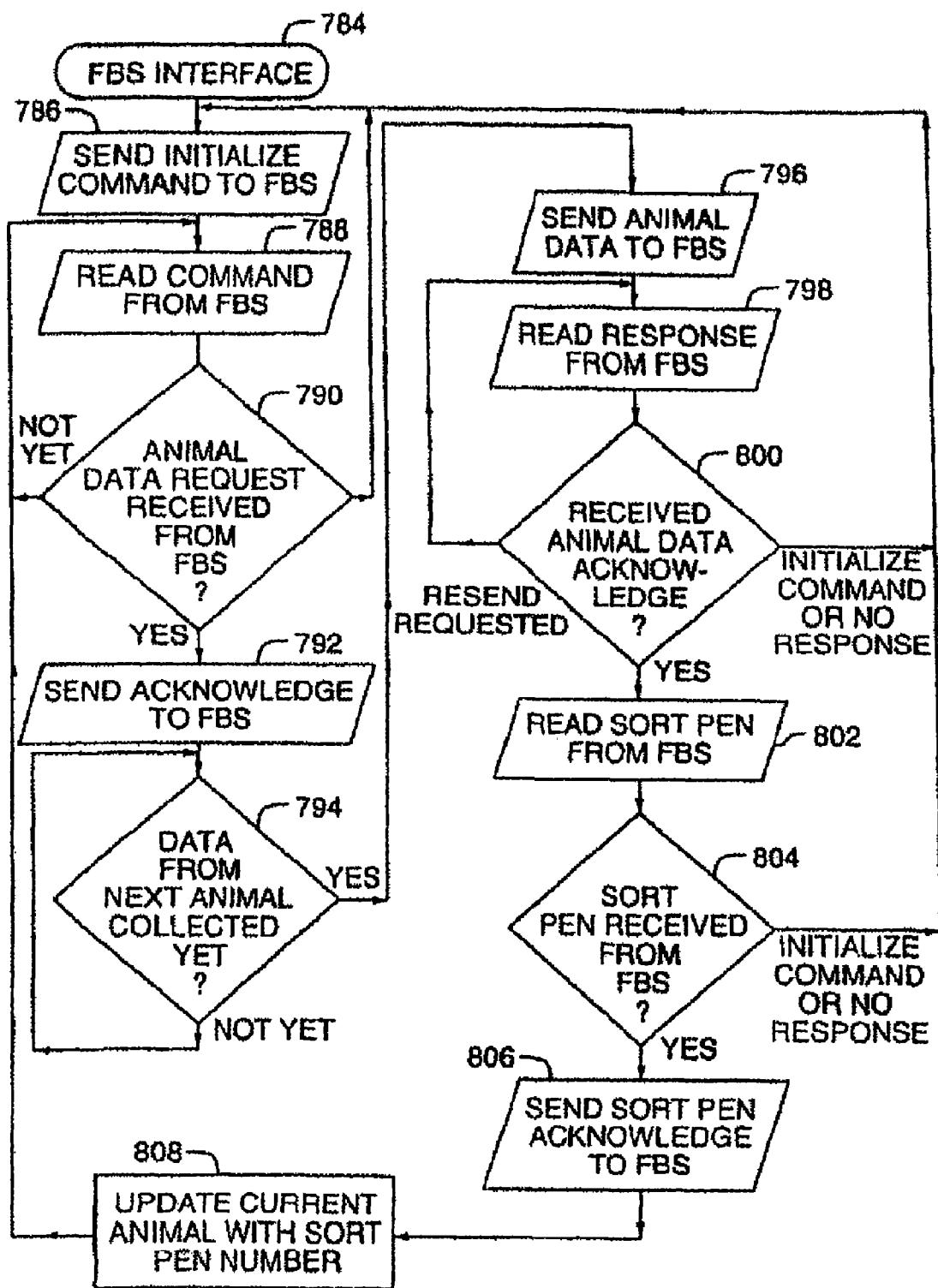


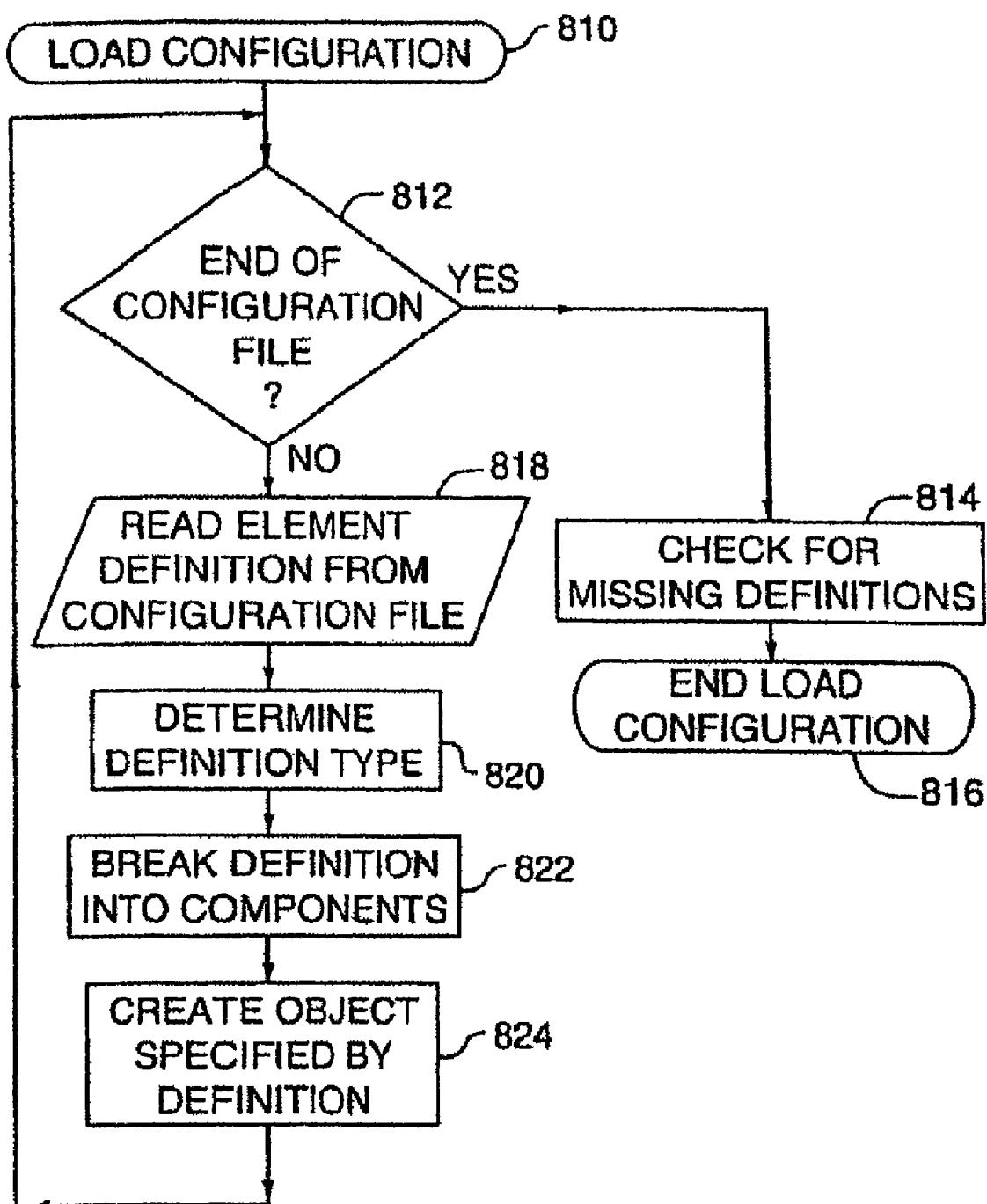
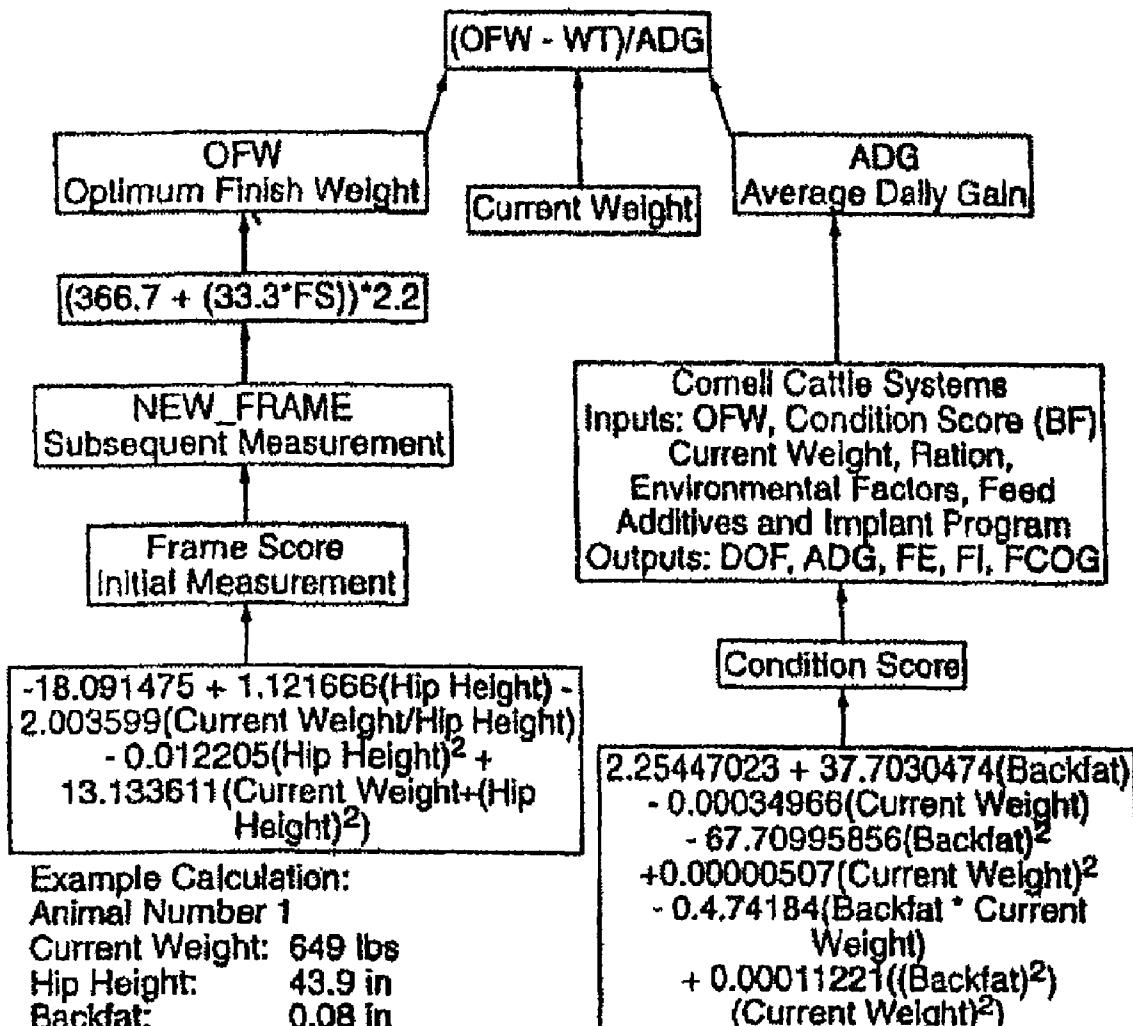
FIG. 35

FIG. 36**Example Calculation:****Animal Number 1**

Current Weight: 649 lbs

Hip Height: 43.9 in

Backfat: 0.08 in

Optimum Finish Weight (OFW)**Initial Measurement:**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Frame Score} &= -18.091475 + 0.03365(649) + 1.121666(43.9) - 2.003599 \\ &\quad (649/43.9) - 0.012205(43.9)^2 + 13.133611(649(43.9)^2) \\ &= 4.27 \text{ (rounded to 2 decimal places)} \end{aligned}$$

Subsequent Measurement:

$$\text{NEW FRAME} = ((BFDR - 0.01253) + (-0.00065)) \text{ (From DTF Method One)}$$

$$= (0.0097689 - 0.01253) + (-0.00065) = 4.25$$

$$\text{OFW} = (366.7 + (33.3 * 4.25)) * 2.2 = 1118 \text{ lbs}$$

Condition Score:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 2.25447023 + 37.7030474(0.08) - 0.00034966(649) - 67.70995853(0.08)^2 \\ &\quad + 0.00000507(649)^2 - 0.04374184(649 * 0.08) + 0.00011221((0.08)^2 / (649)^2) \\ &= 5 \text{ (rounded to nearest whole number)} \end{aligned}$$

Input into Cornell Model: Current Weight, OFW, Condition Score**Output from Cornell Model: ADG = 3.34****DTF = (1118 - 649) / 3.34 = 145 Days (rounded to nearest whole number)**

FIG. 37

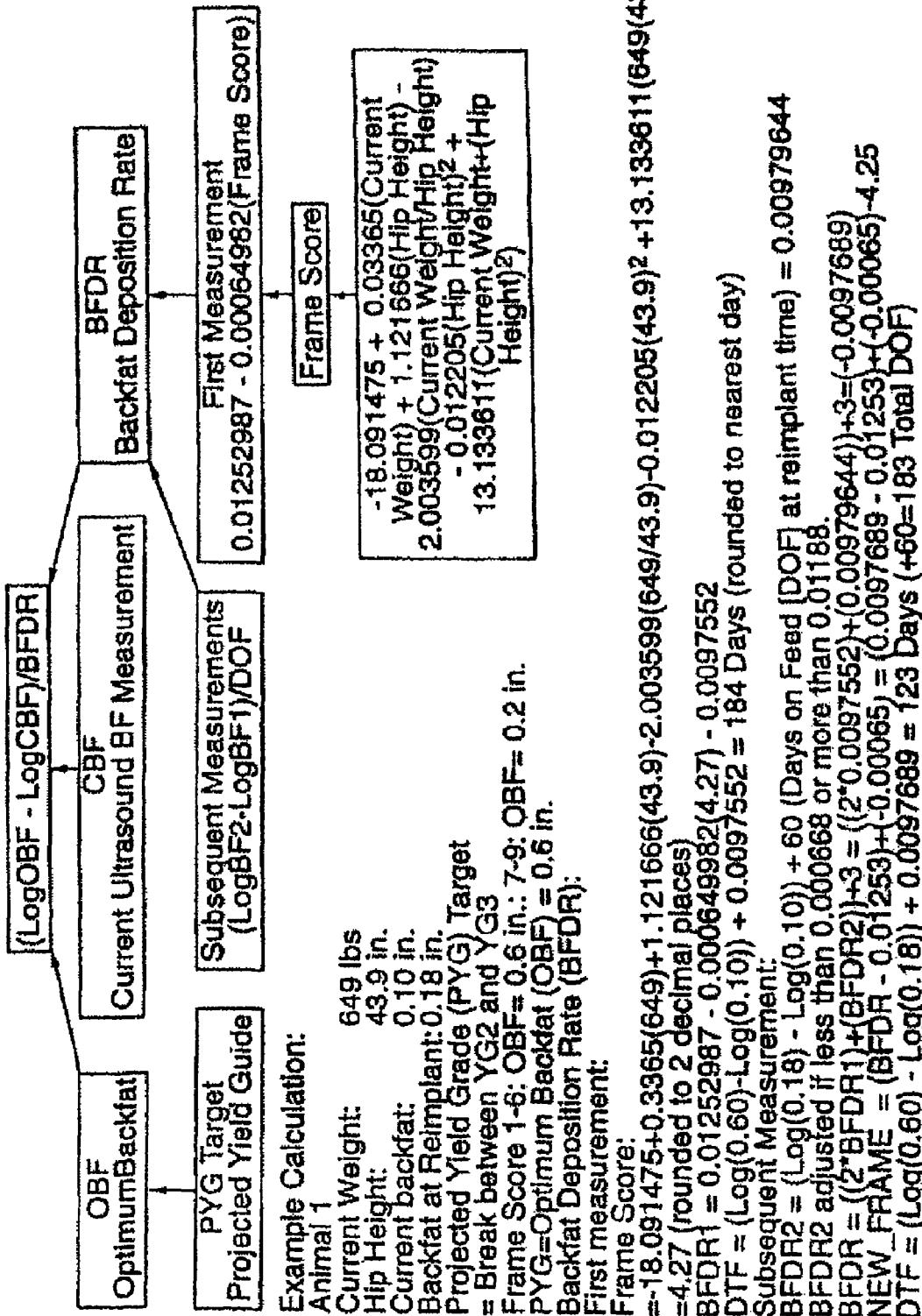


FIG. 38

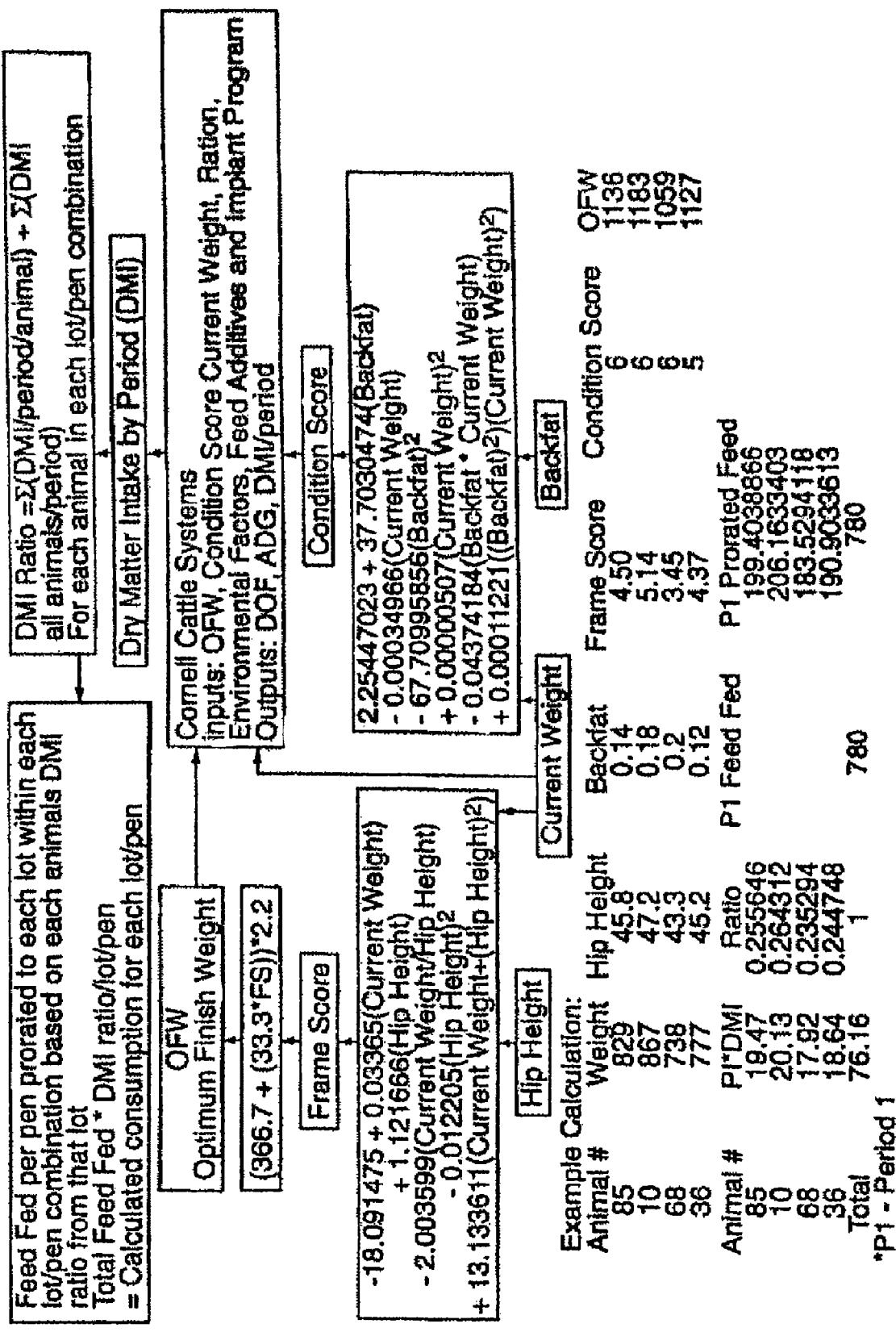
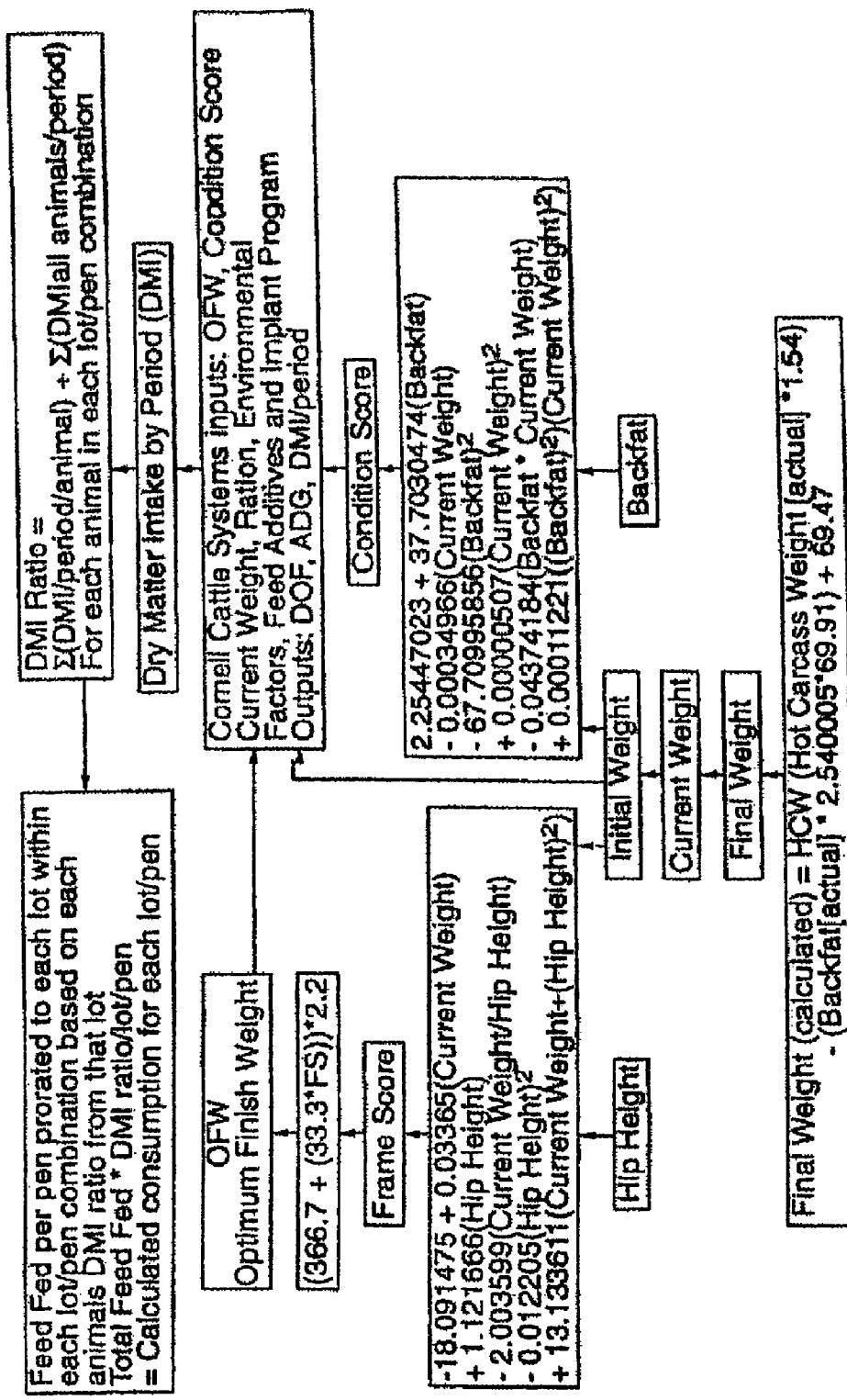


FIG. 39A



At remeasurement use Cornell Cattle Systems to:

- 1) Recalculate DMI ratios from start of feeding to remeasurement date, by inputting Hip Height, Backfat, Initial Weight, Current Weight, and OFW. These new DMI ratios will be used to reapportion feed consumption among the animals in each lot/pen.

FIG. 39B

2) Calculate DMI ratios to be used from the remeasurement date to the next measurement to prorate feed to each lot/pen, by inputting Hip Height, Backfat, Current Weight and OFW. When a final weight is calculated for each animal (after slaughter), the Cornell Cattle Systems model will be used to determine DMI ratios for each animal to reapportion total feed fed per pen to calculate individual animal consumption in each lot/pen. Inputs are initial weight, final weight and condition score (based on actual backfat)

Example Calculation:

Animal #	Weight	Current Wt	Hip Height	Backfat	FS	CS	OFW		
85	829	1028	45.8	0.14	4.50	6	1136		
10	867	1066	47.2	0.18	5.14	6	1183		
68	738	937	43.3	0.2	3.45	6	1059		
36	777	976	45.2	0.12	4.37	5	1127		
			CP	CP			NP		
Animal #	CP1DMI	Ratio	Feed Fed	Prorated Feed	NP2 DMI	Ratio	NP Feed Fed	Prorated Feed	NP
85	19.47	0.255646	767	21.13	0.253206		1519		
10	20.13	0.264312	793	21.81	0.261354		1568		
68	17.92	0.235294	706	19.81	0.237388		1424		
36	18.64	0.244748	734	20.7	0.248053		1488		
Total	76.16	1	3000	83.45	1		6000		
Animal #	HCW	Actual BF	Final Wt	DMI Overall	Ratio	Feed Fed	Prorated Feed	Feed/Gain	
85	716	0.25	1128	20.50	0.25262	2440	8.17		
10	745	0.3	1163	21.26	0.26203	2531	8.54		
68	667	0.35	1034	19.22	0.23686	2288	7.72		
36	710	0.25	1118	20.16	0.24849	2400	7.03		
				81.14	1	9660	8660		

¹CP - Current Period (initial measurement to remeasurement)
²NP - Next Period - DMI ratios to be used for period from remeasurement to next measurement.

FIG. 40

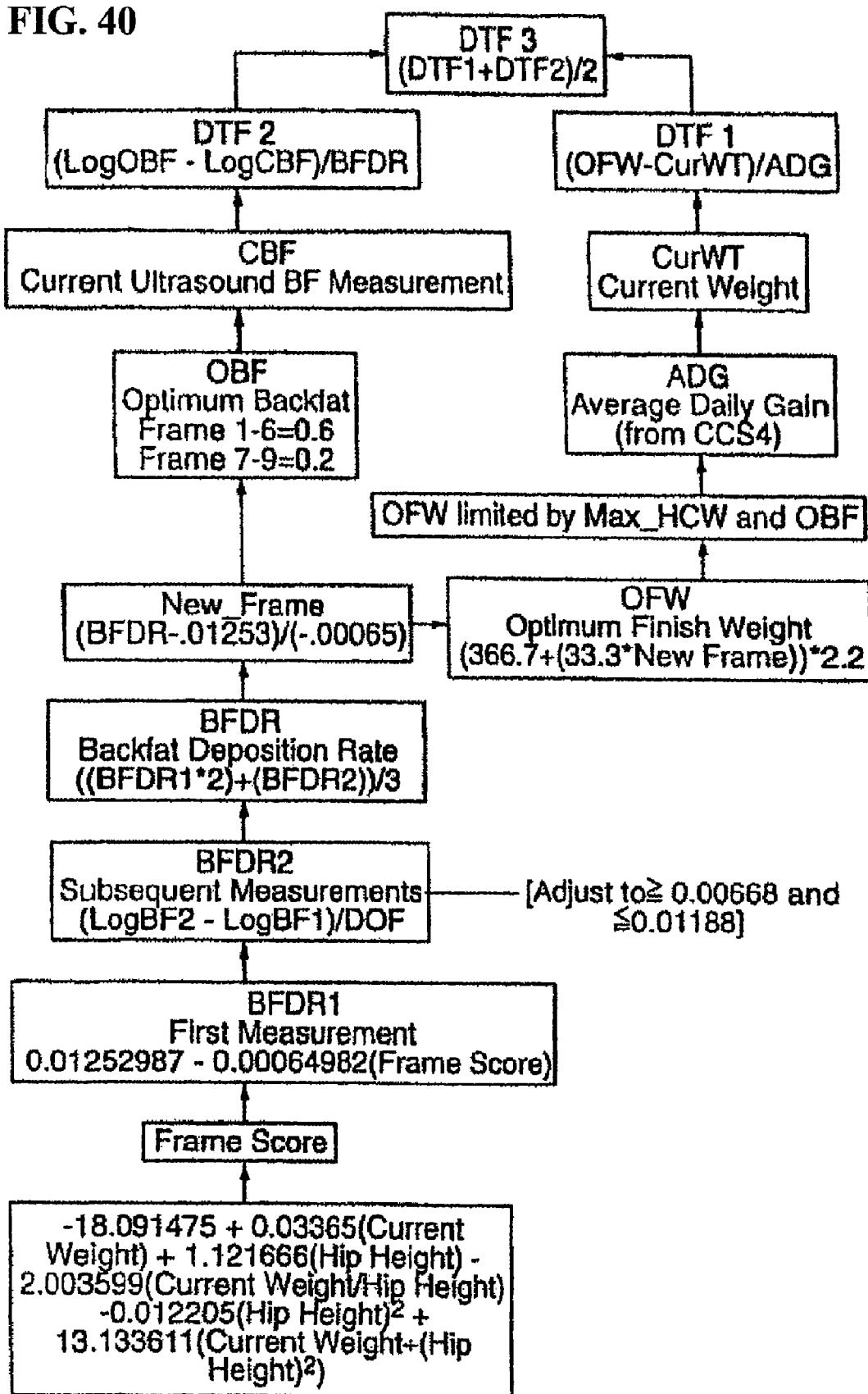


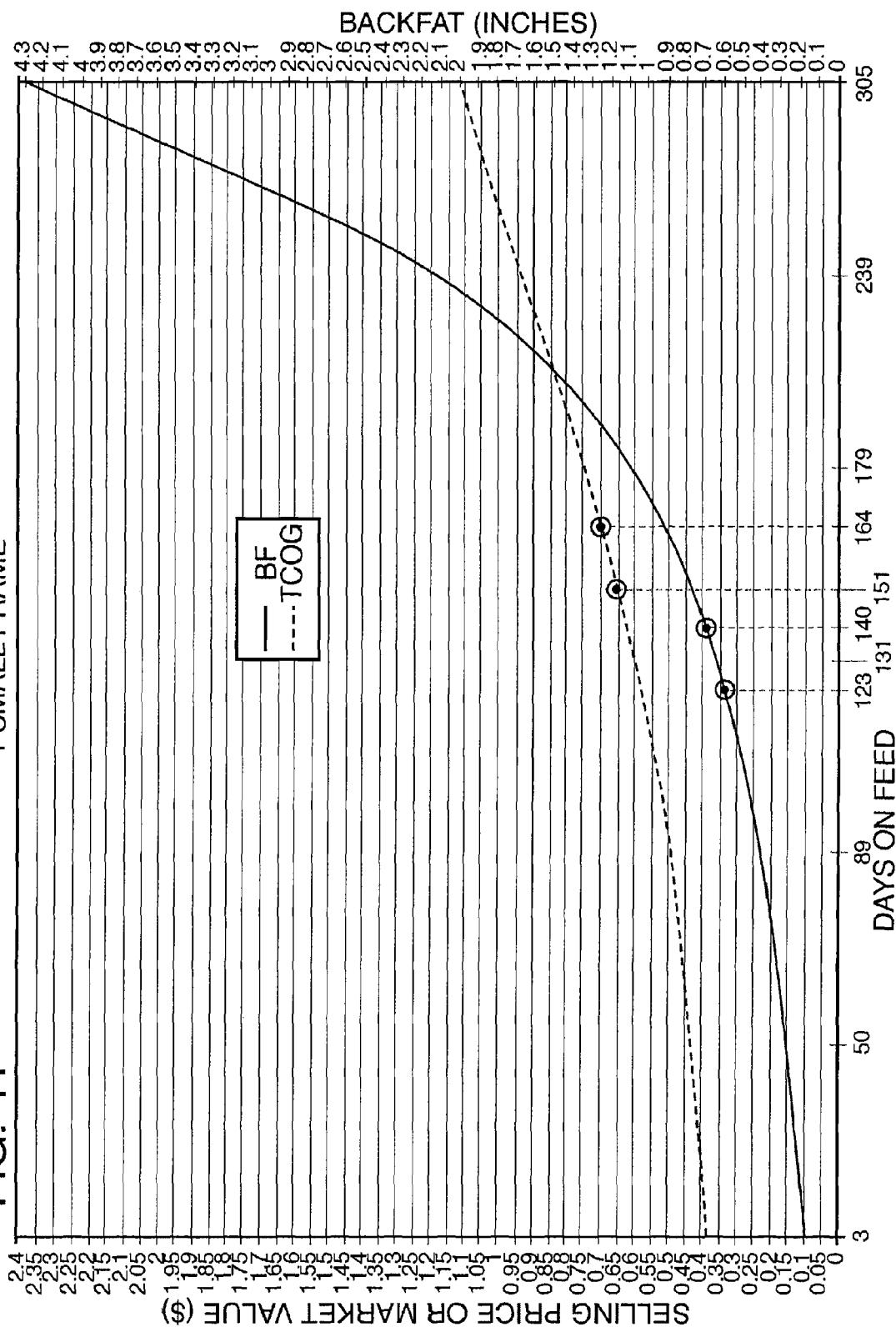
FIG. 41

FIG. 42

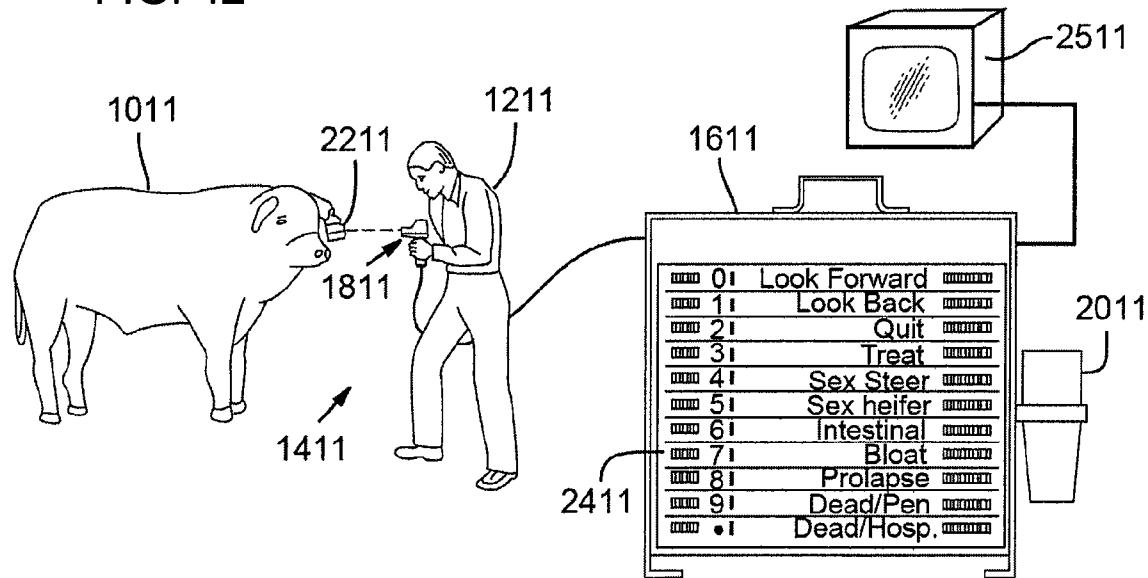
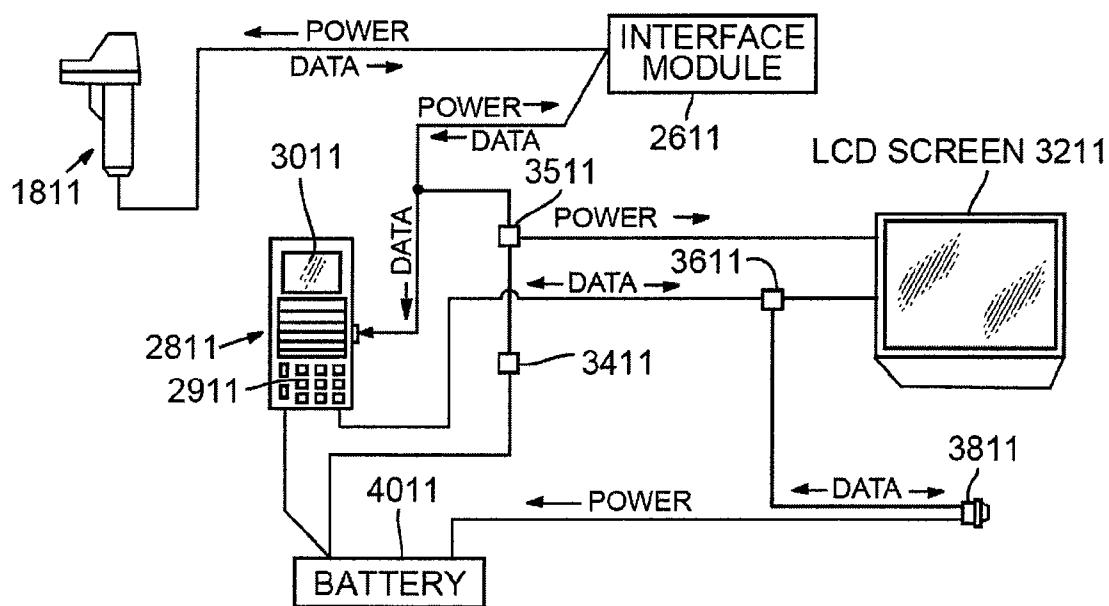
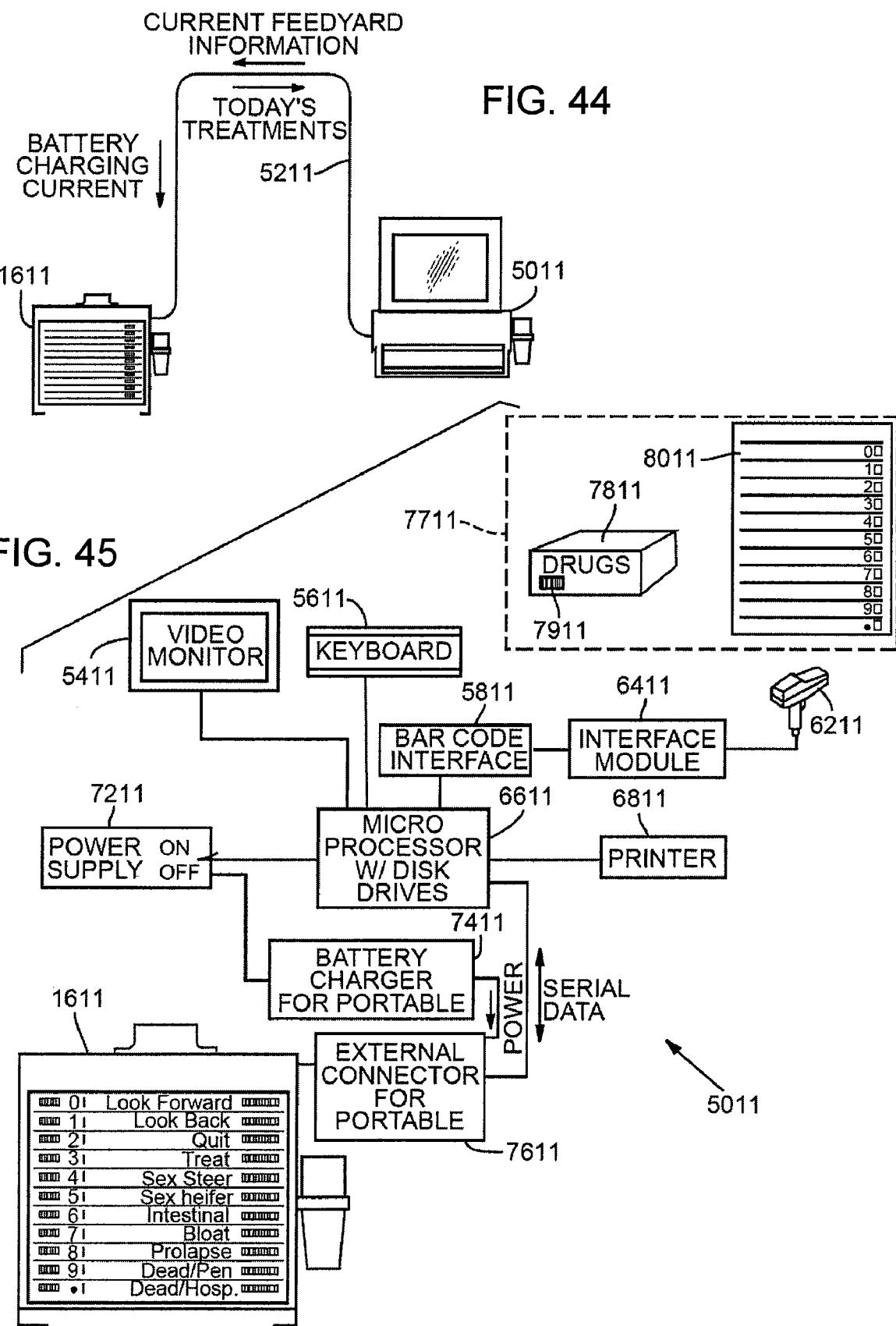


FIG. 43





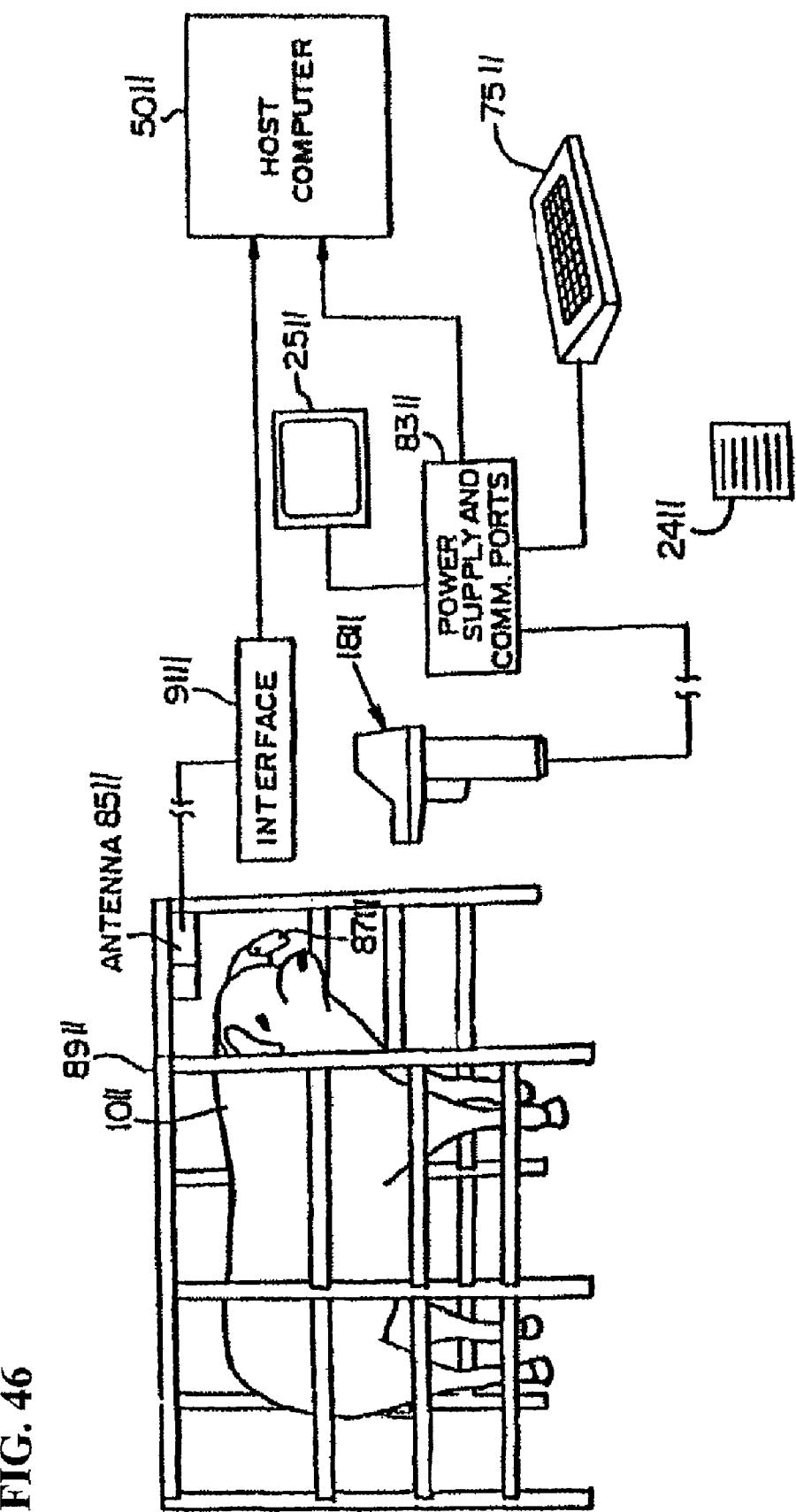


FIG. 46

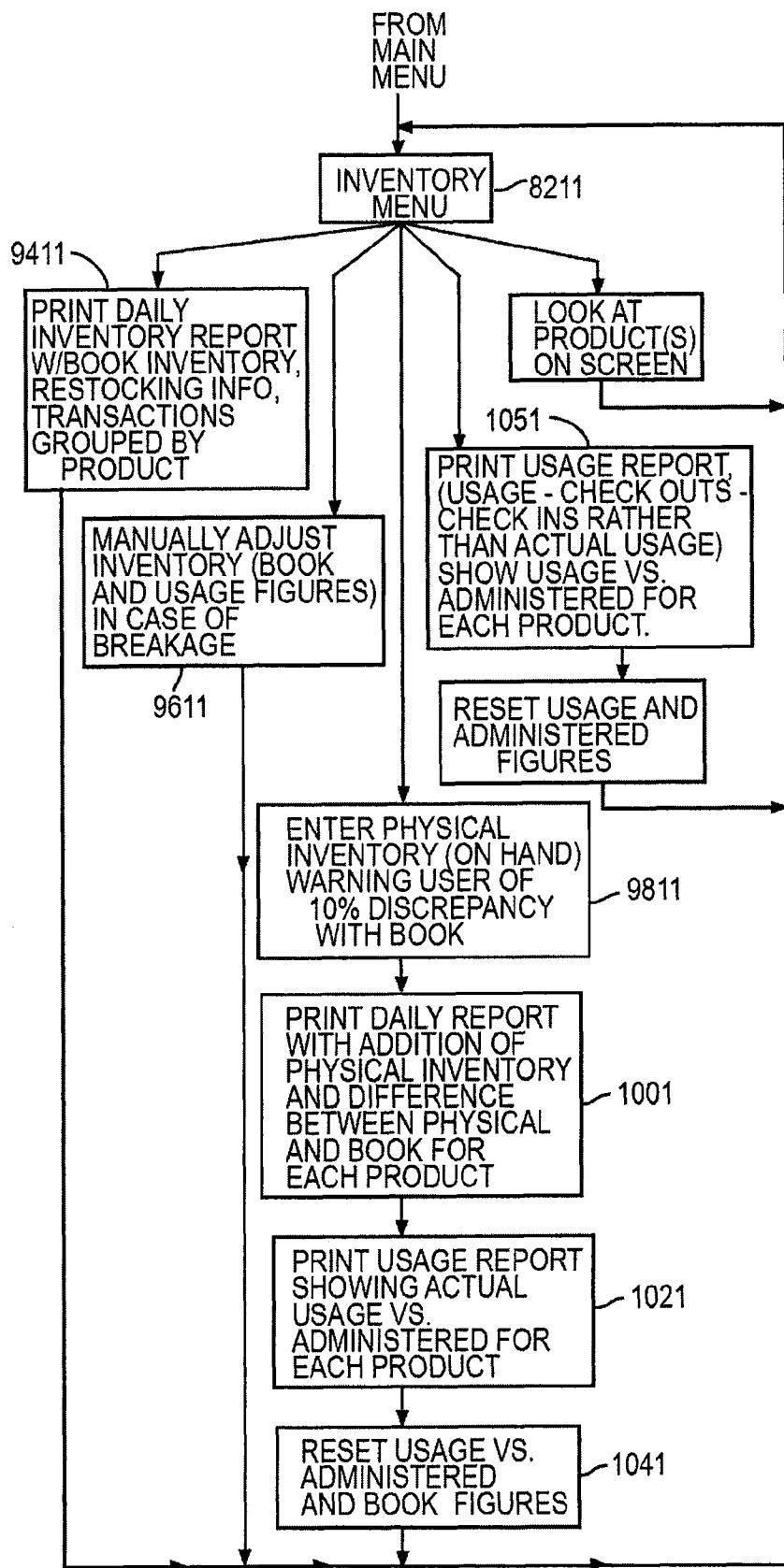


FIG. 47A

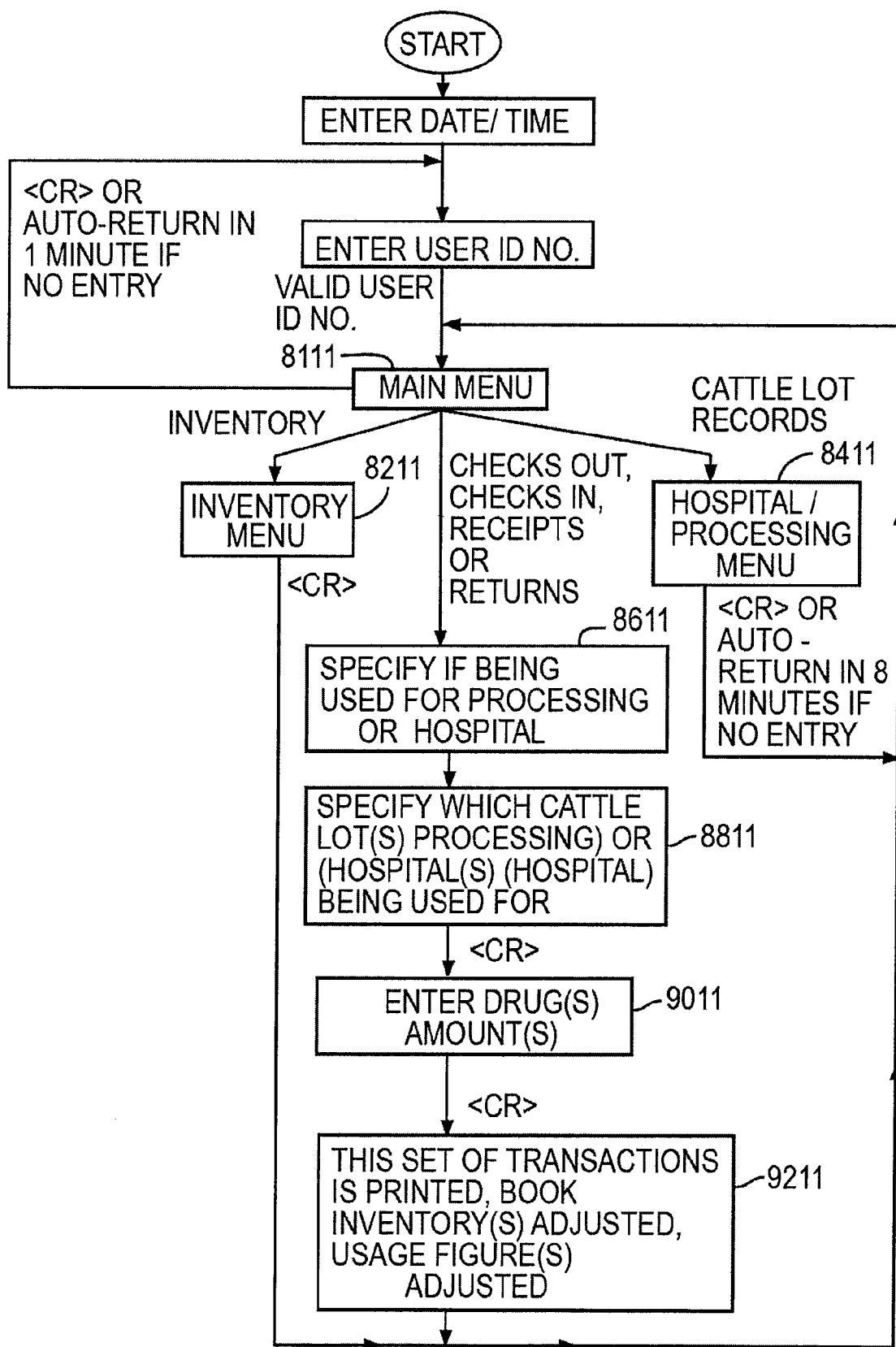


FIG. 47B

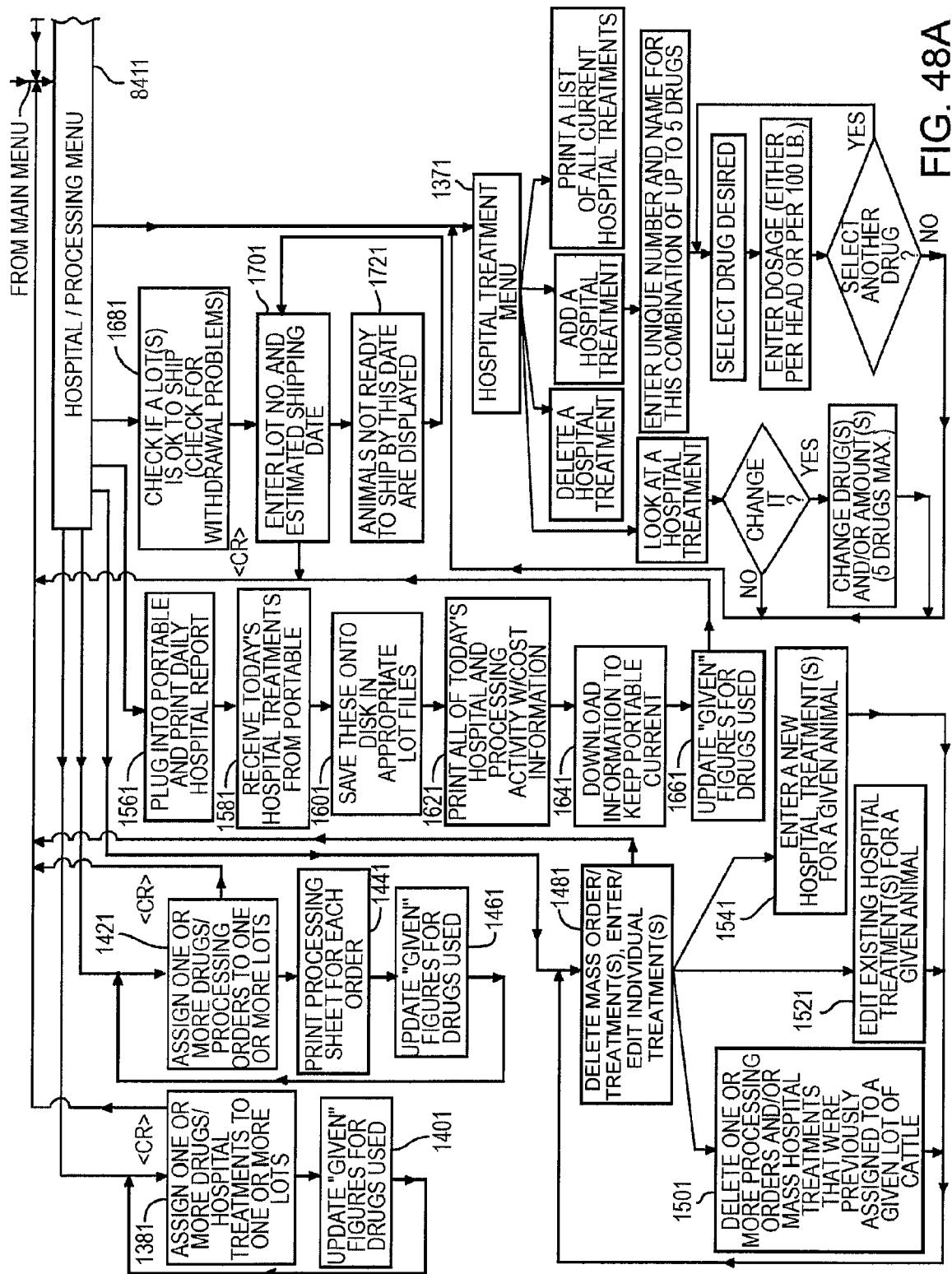


FIG. 48A

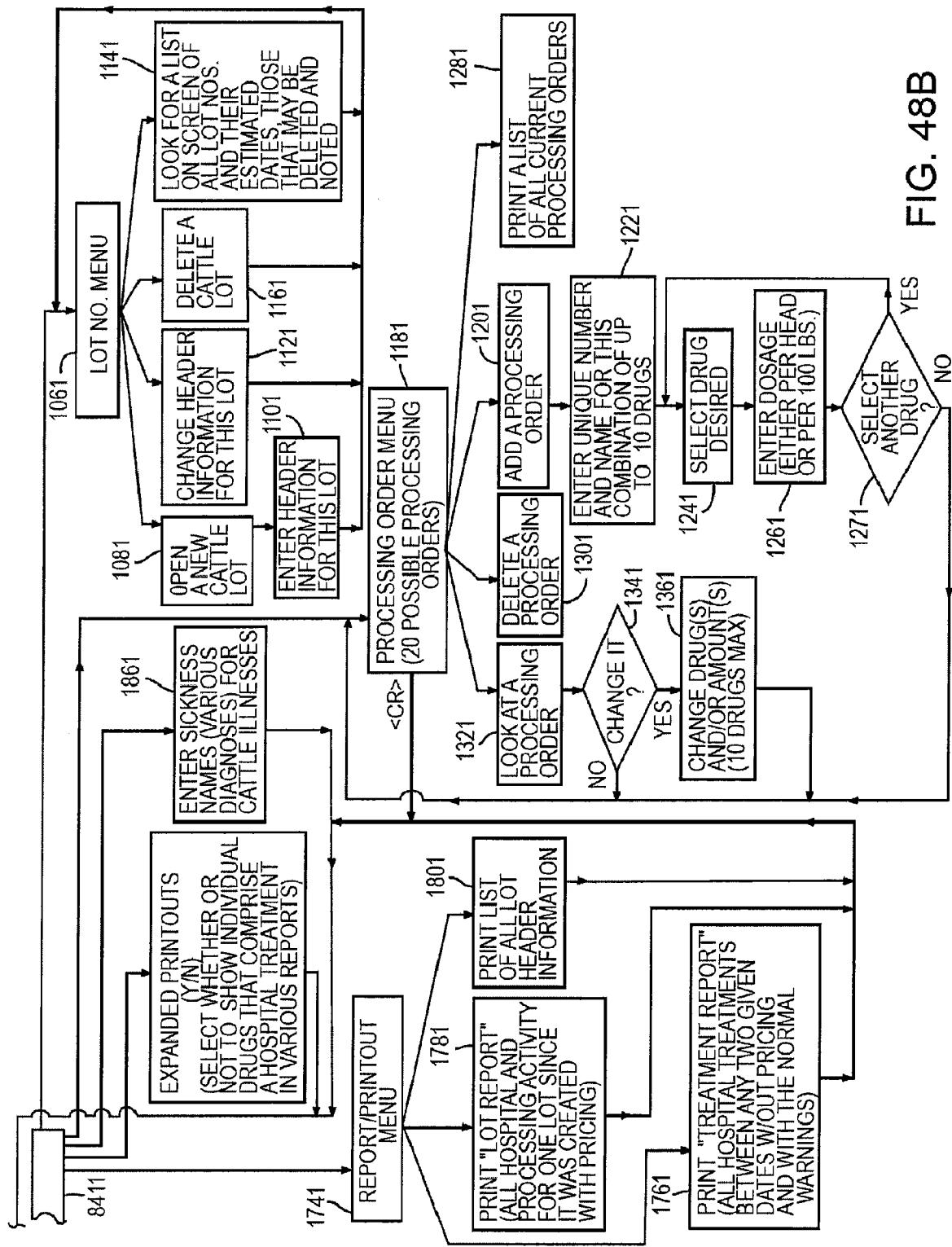


FIG. 48B

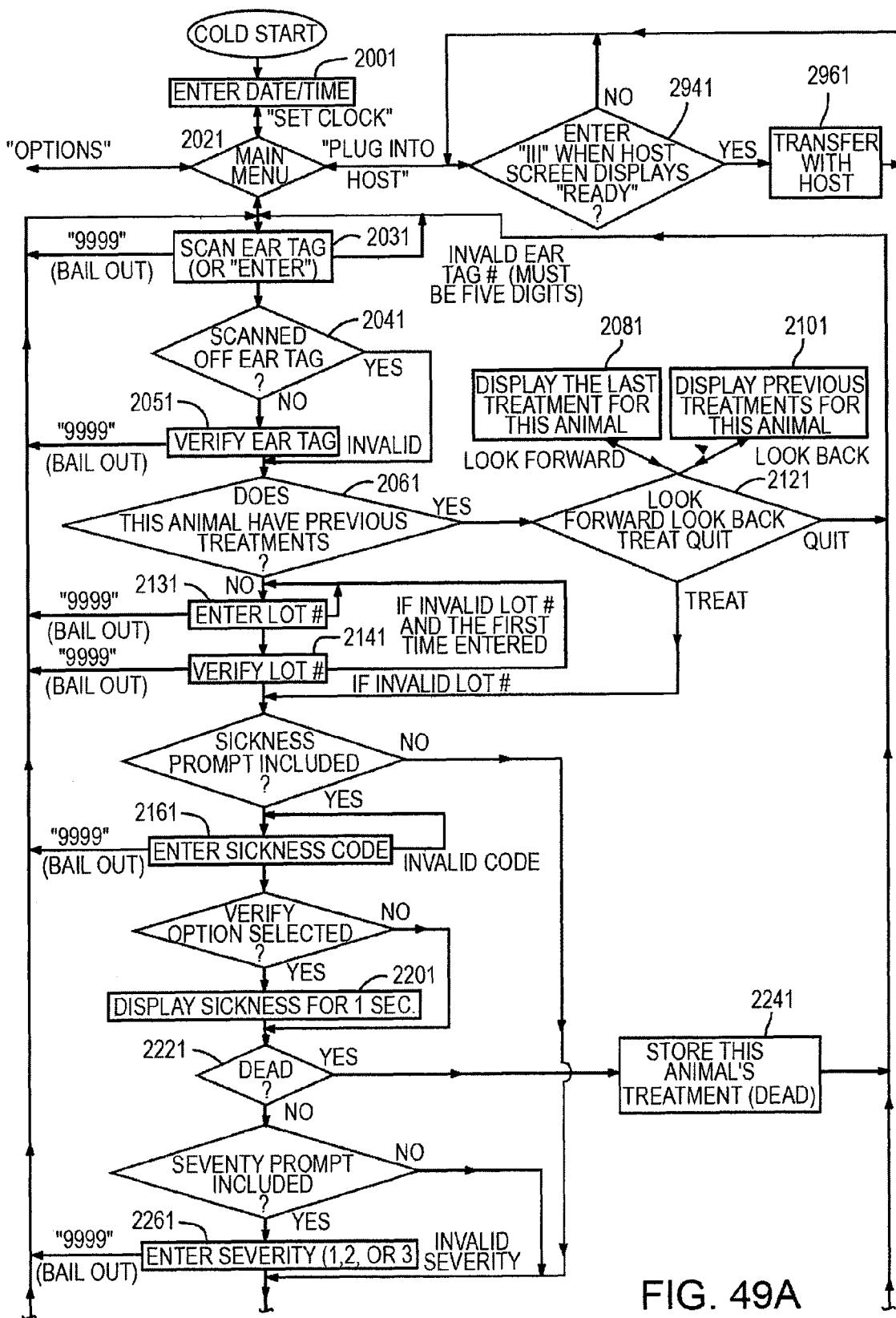


FIG. 49A

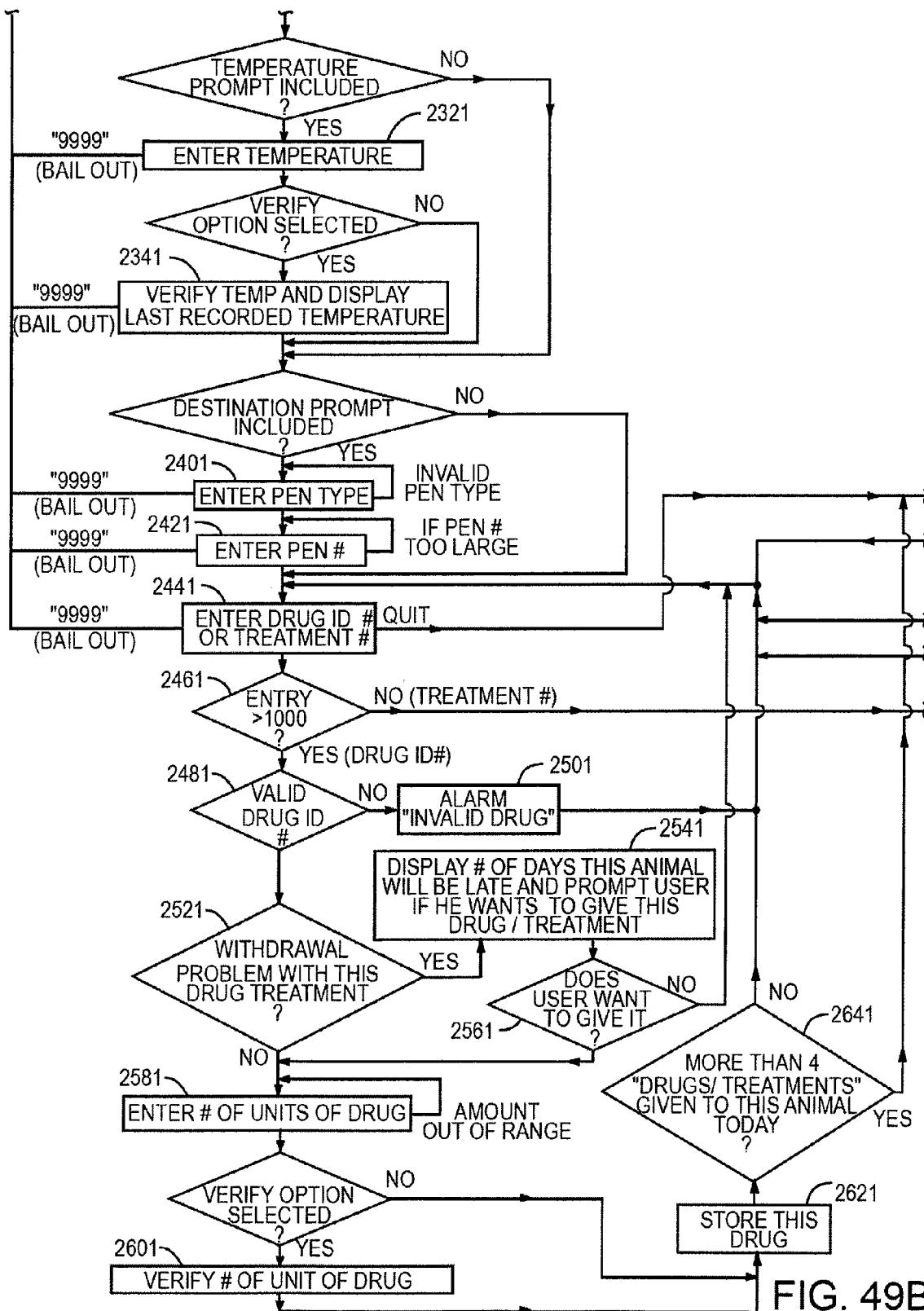


FIG. 49B

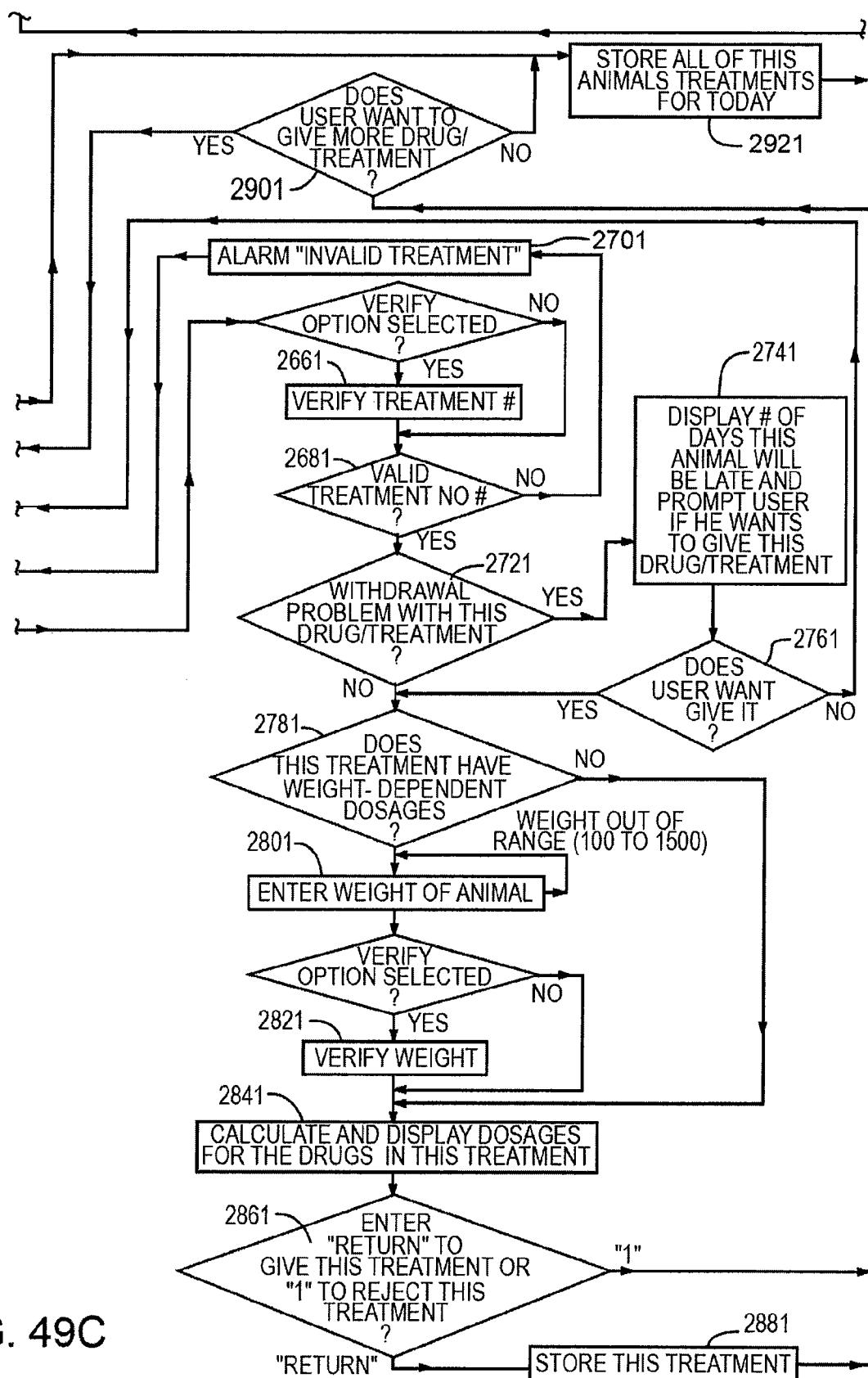


FIG. 49C

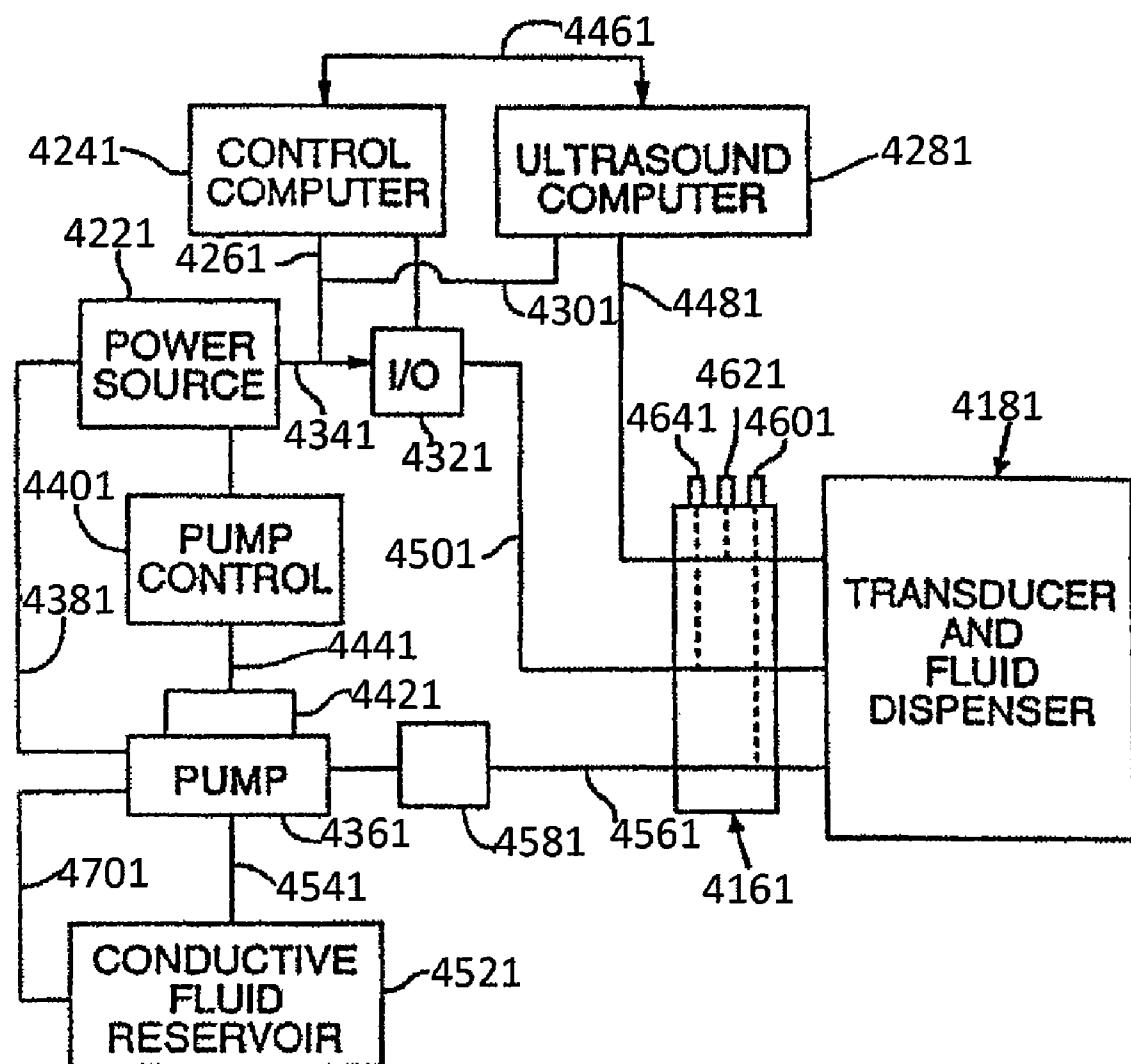
FIG. 50

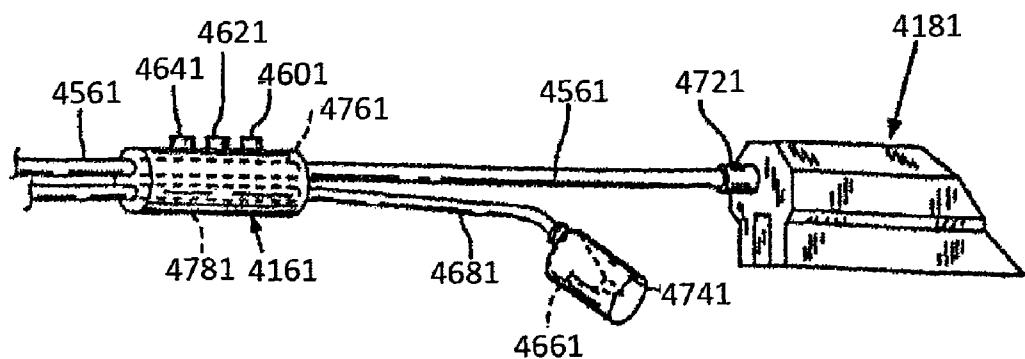
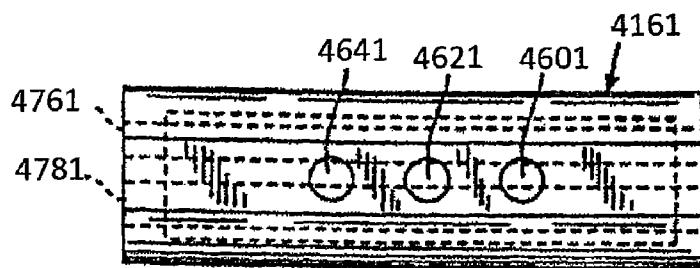
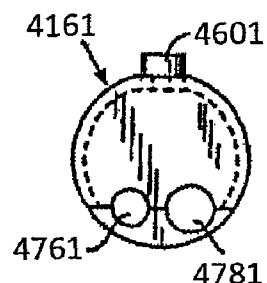
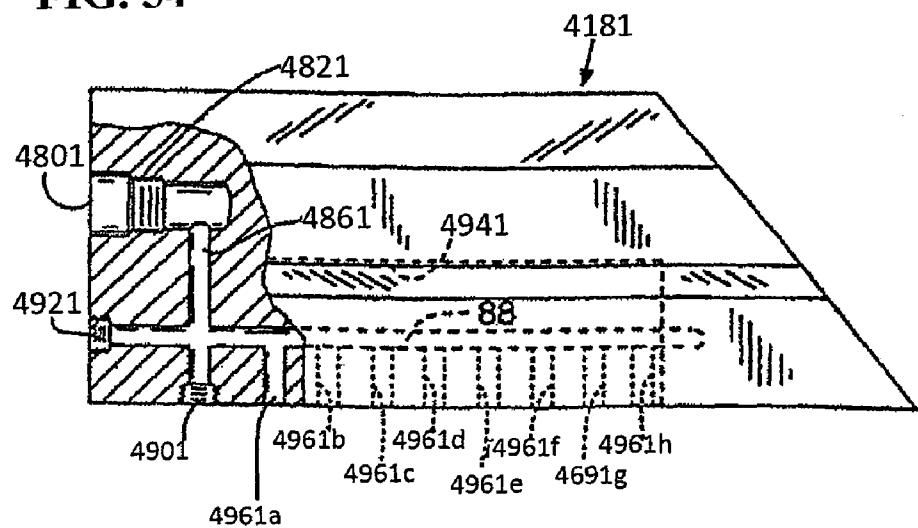
FIG. 51**FIG. 52****FIG. 53****FIG. 54**

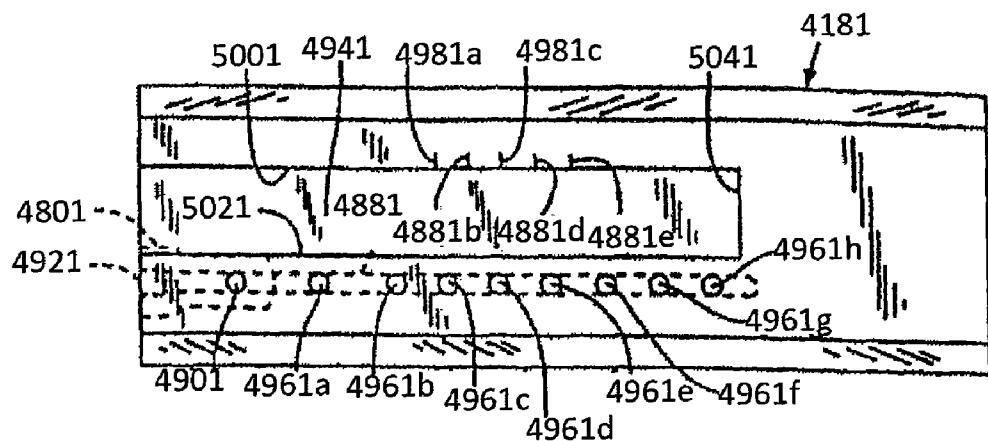
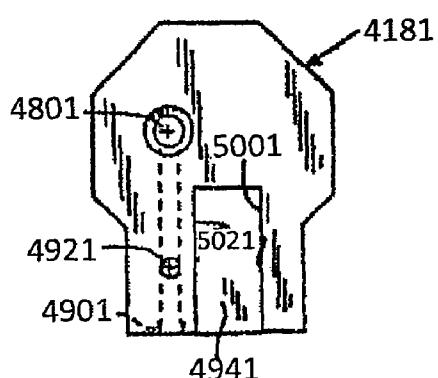
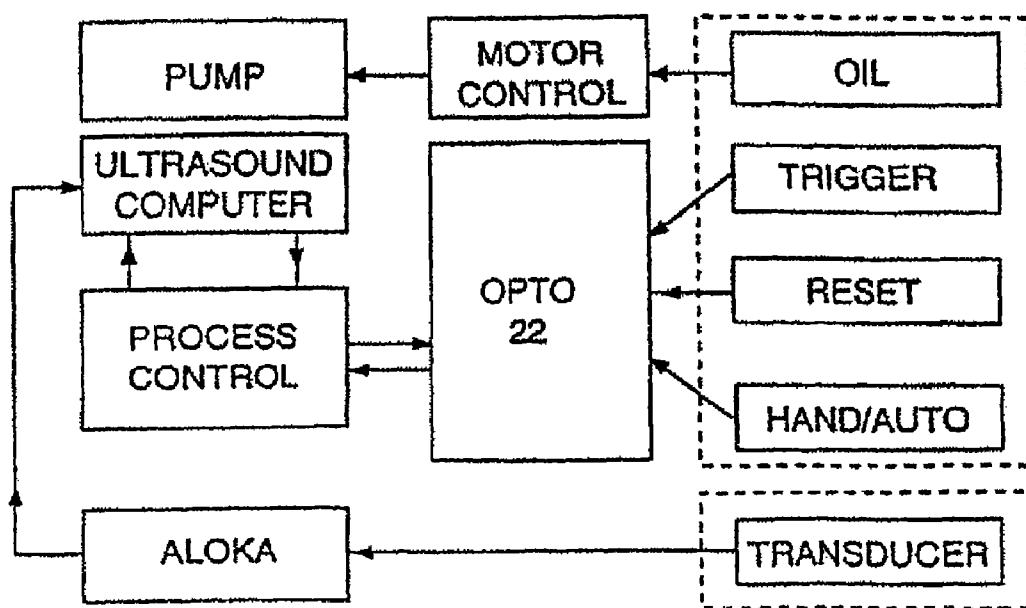
FIG. 55**FIG. 56****FIG. 57**

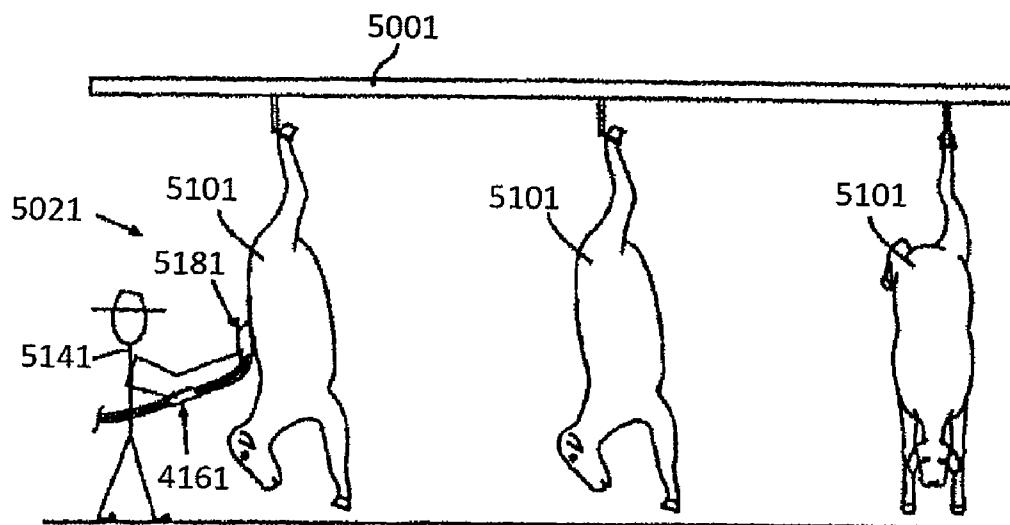
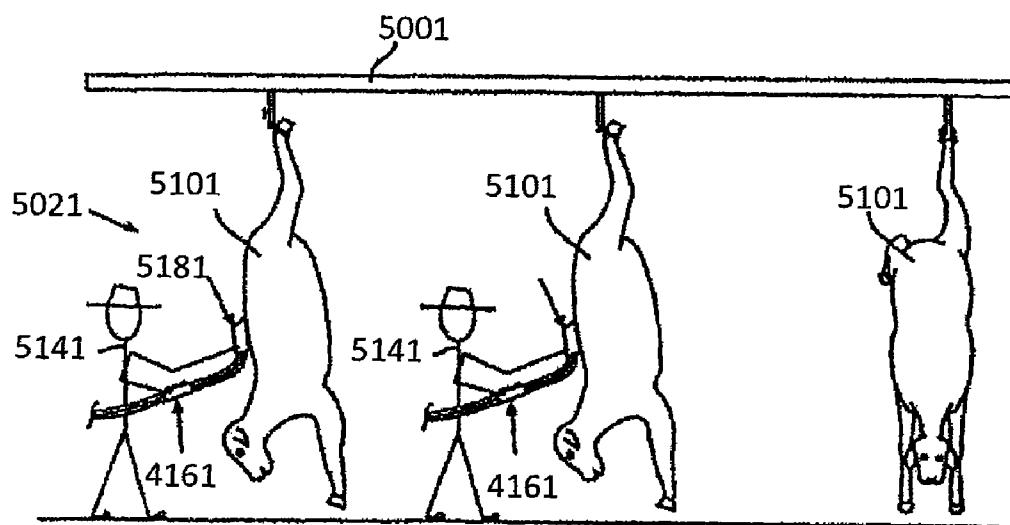
FIG. 58**FIG. 59**

FIG. 60

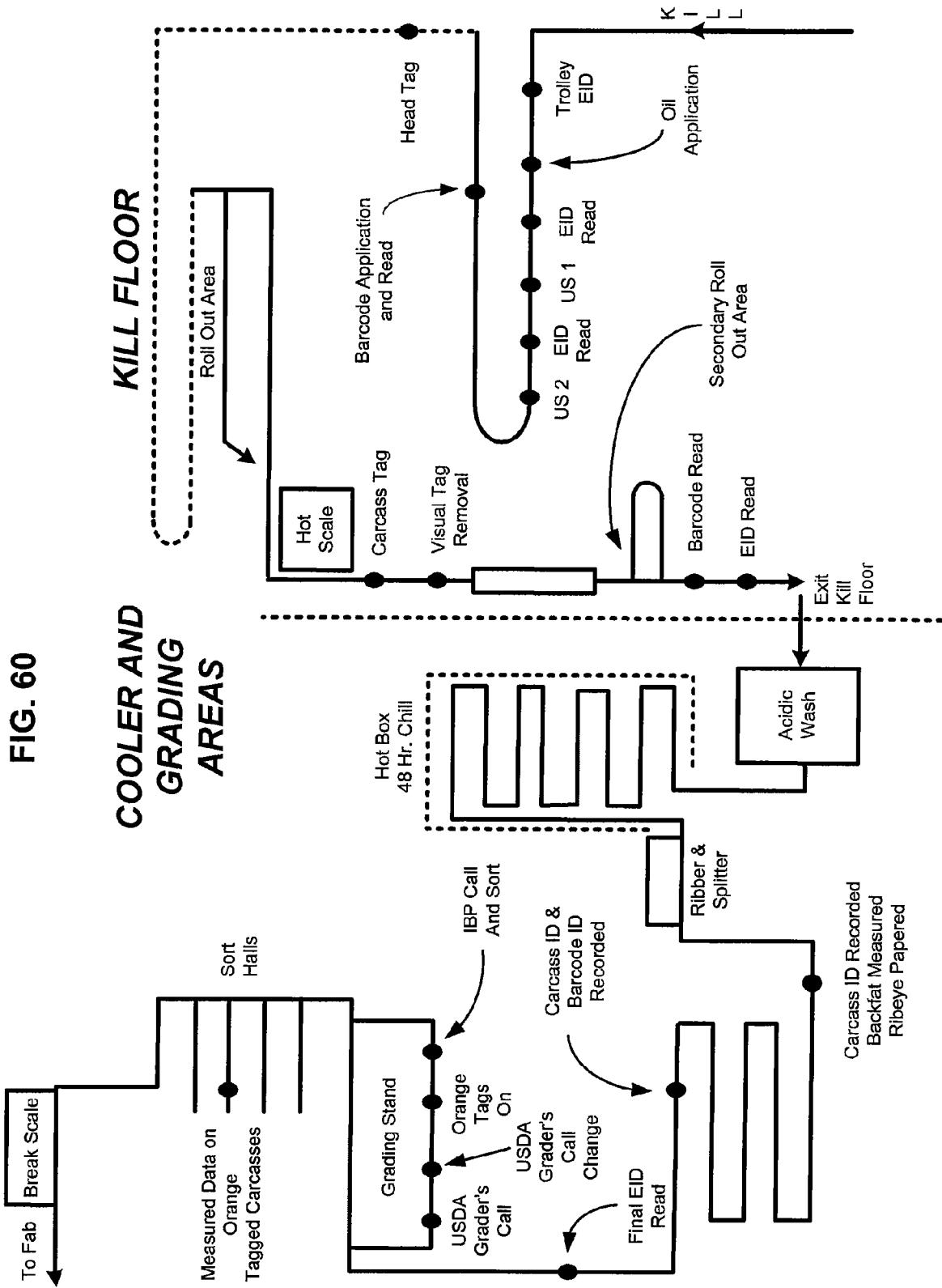


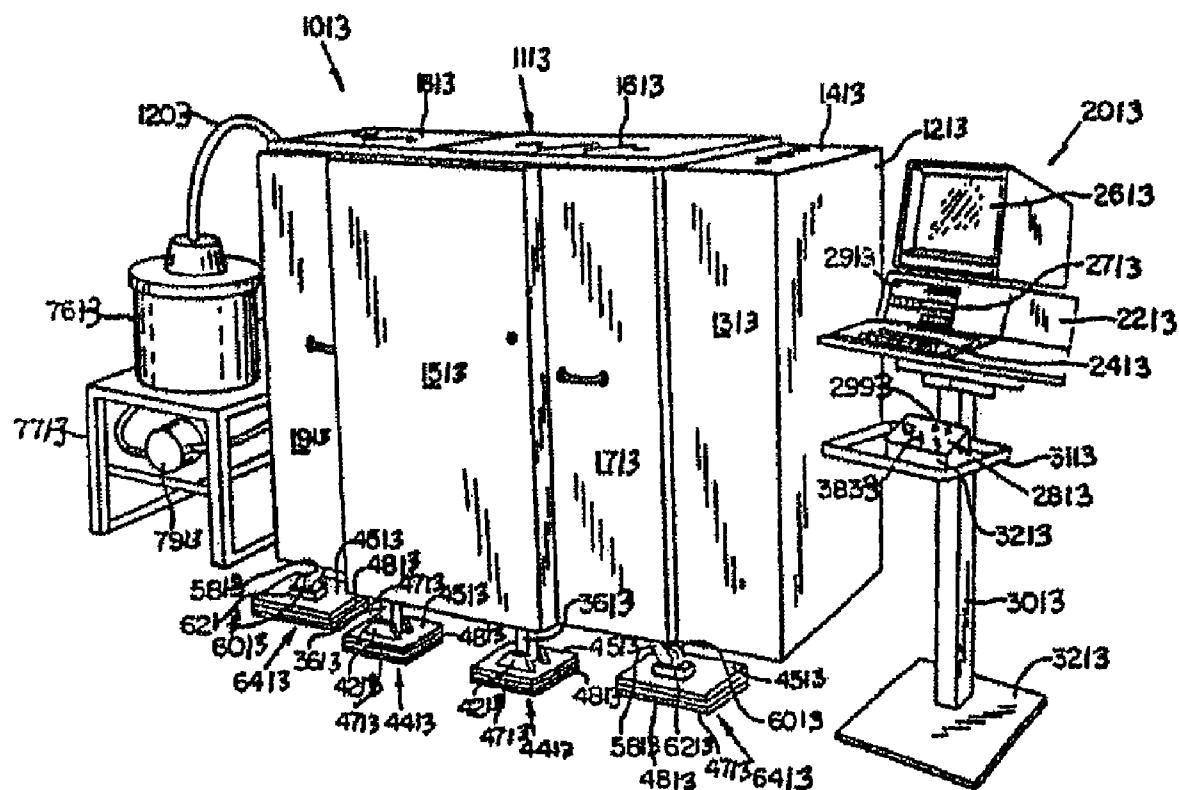
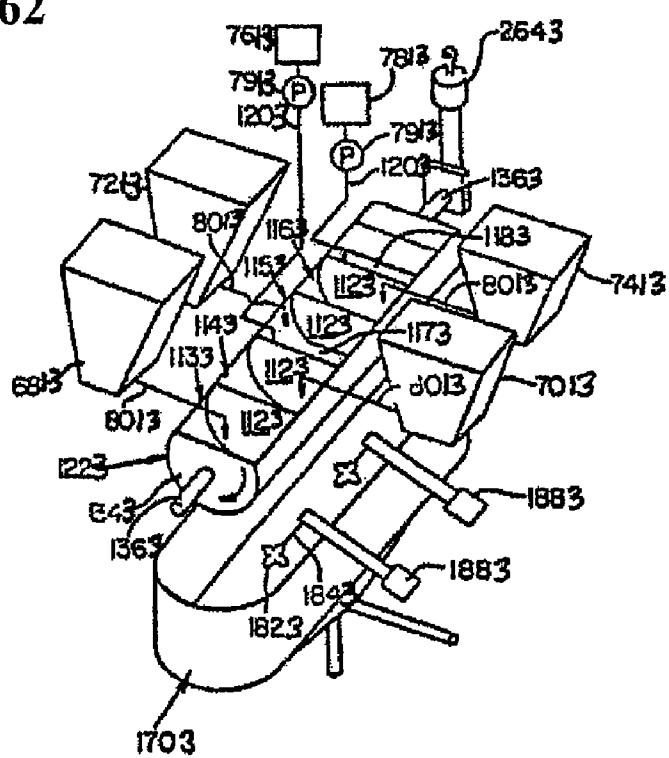
FIG. 61**FIG. 62**

FIG. 63

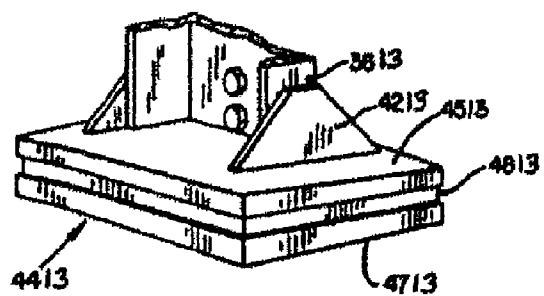


FIG. 64

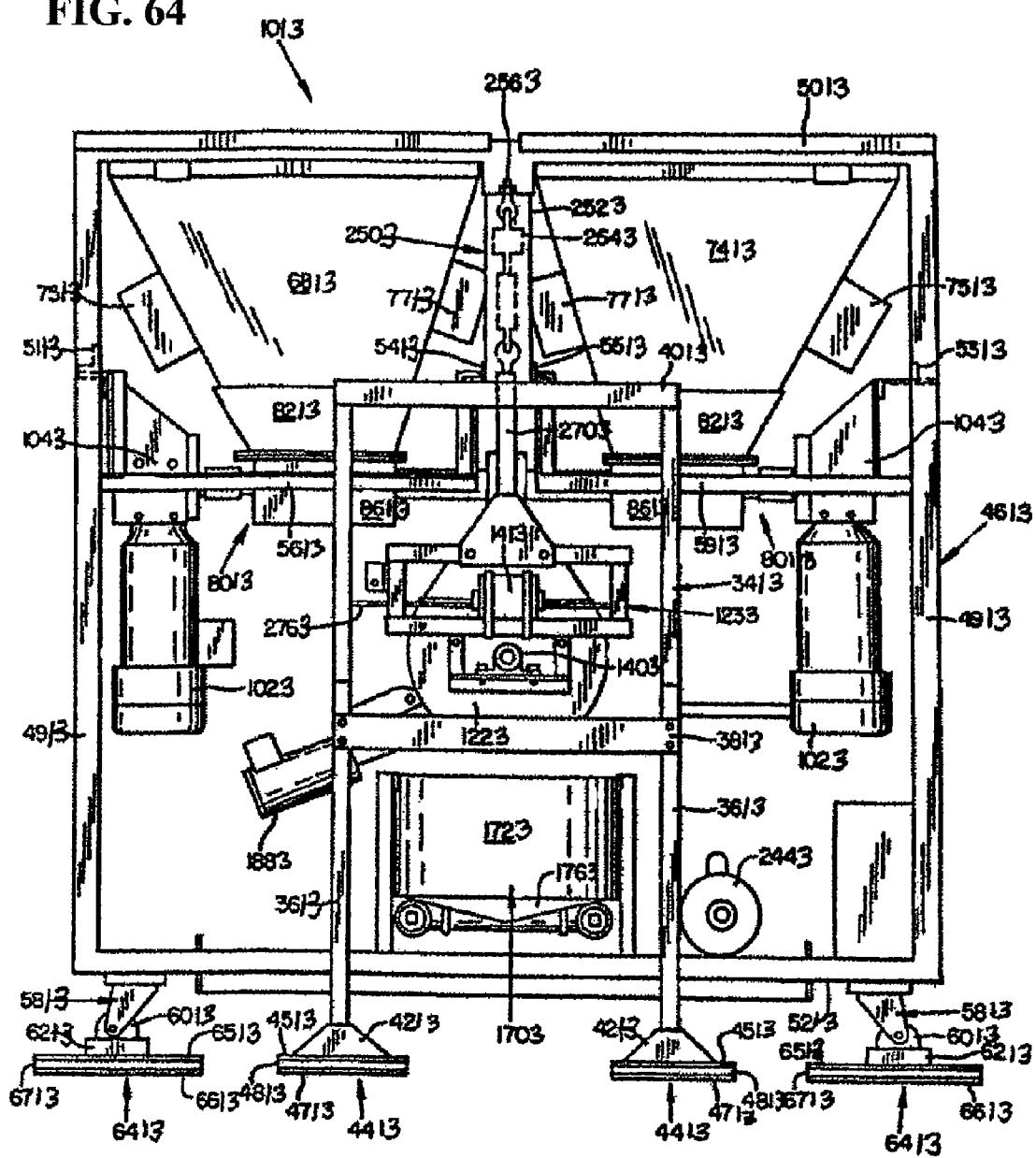


FIG. 65

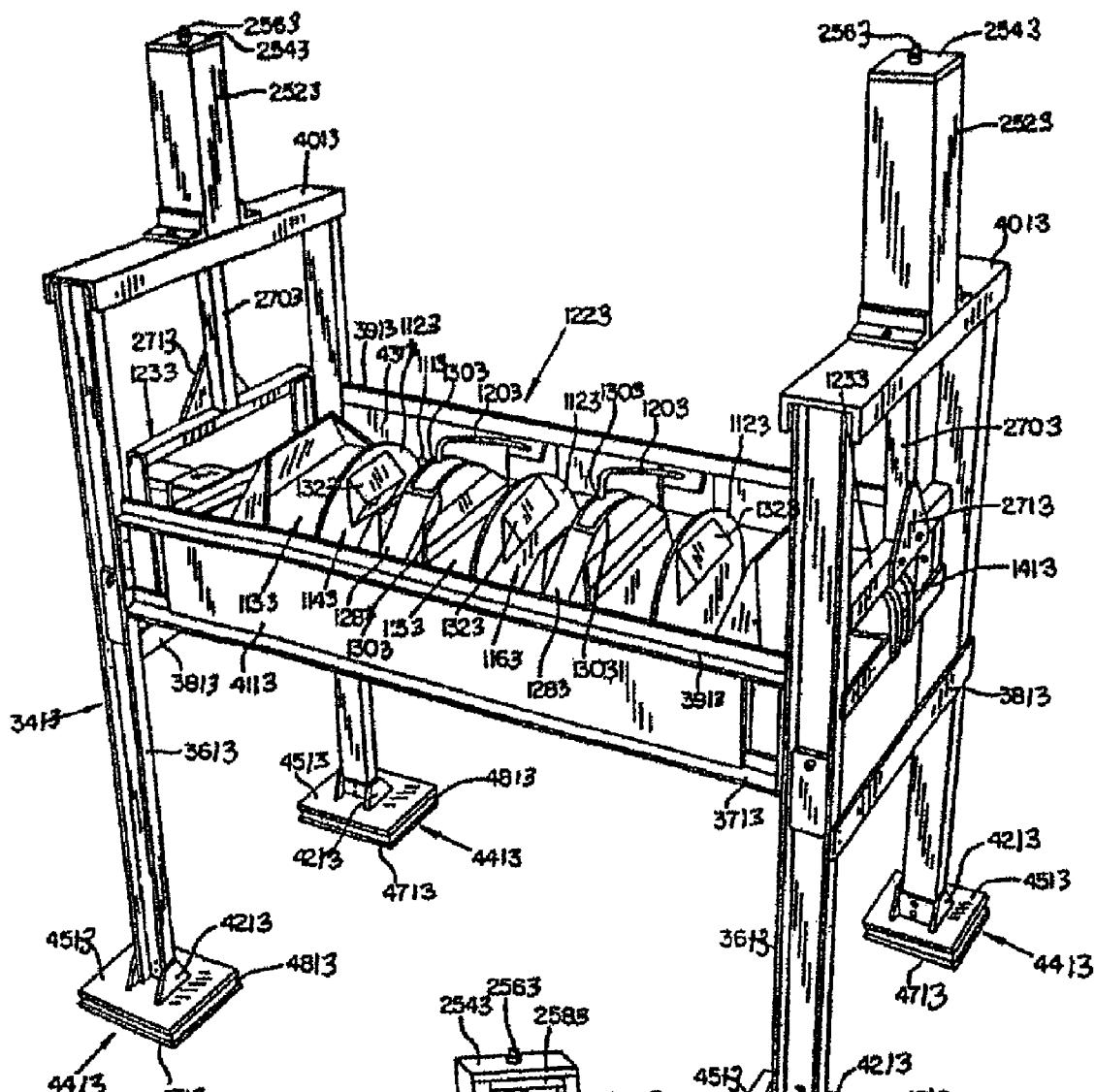


FIG. 66

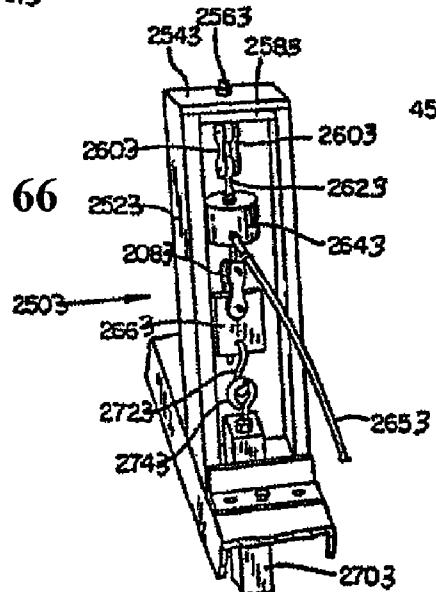


FIG. 67

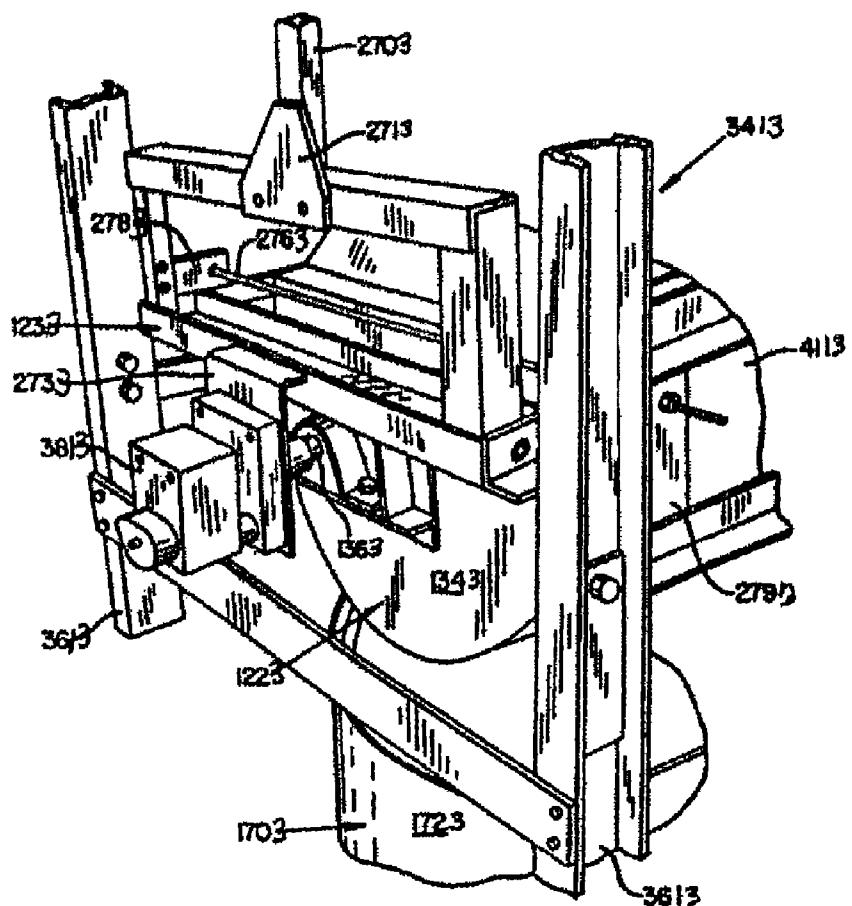


FIG. 68

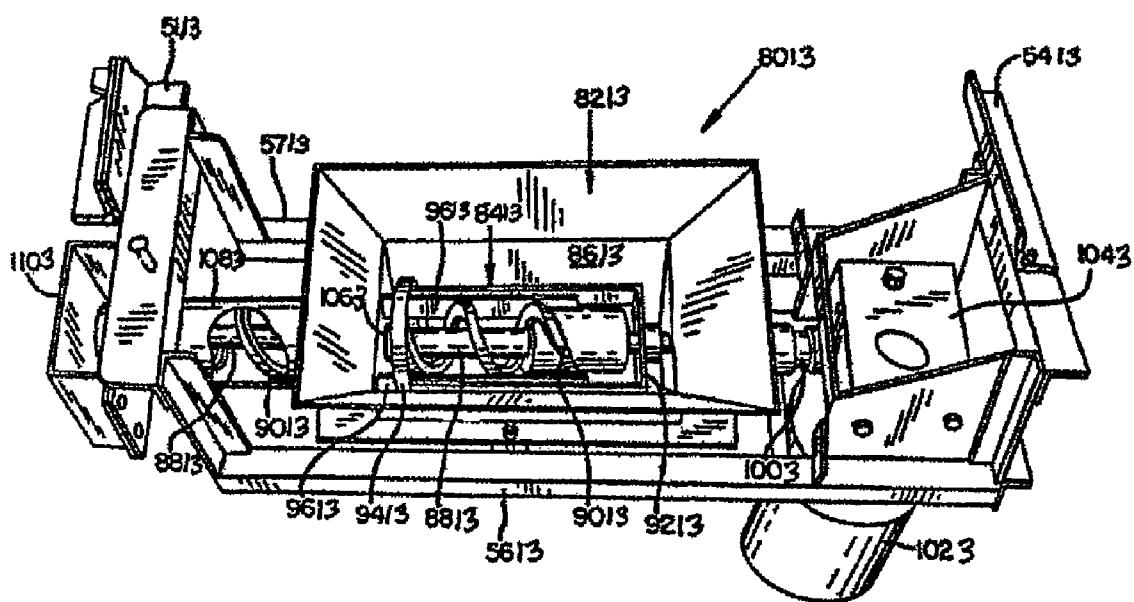


FIG. 69

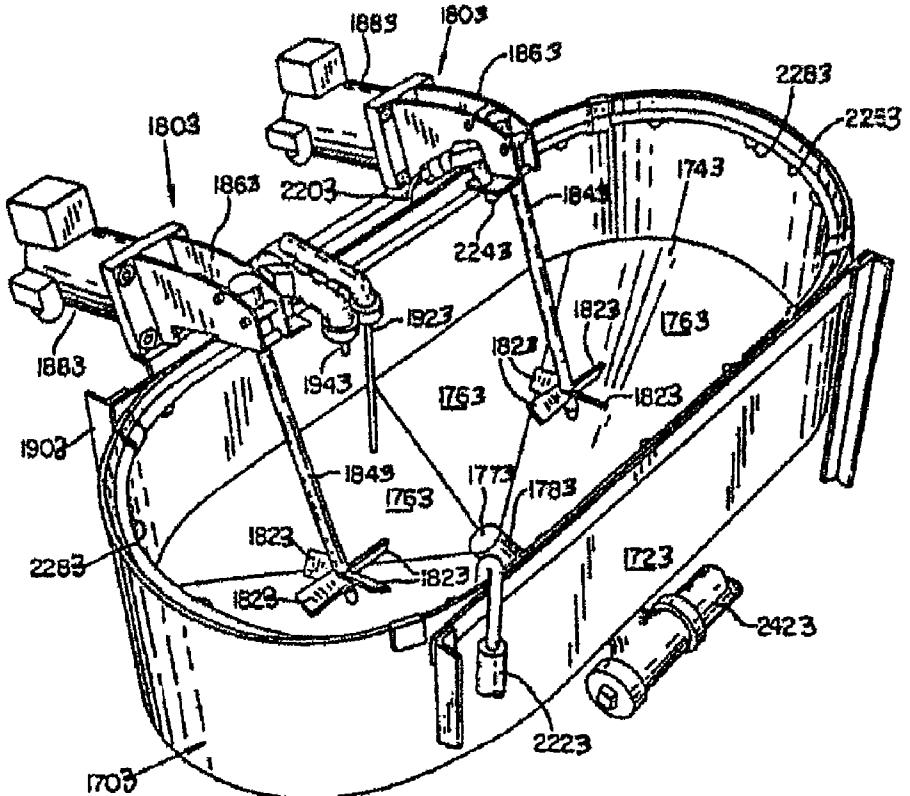


FIG. 70

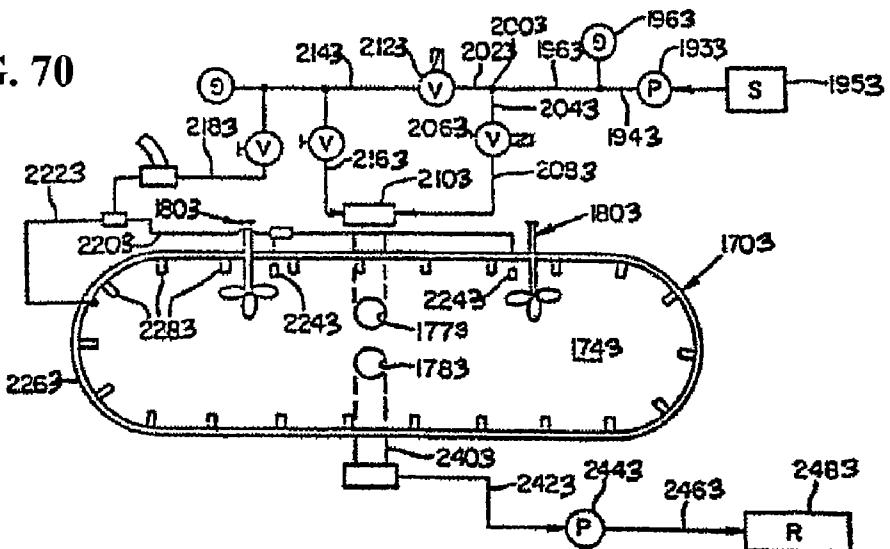
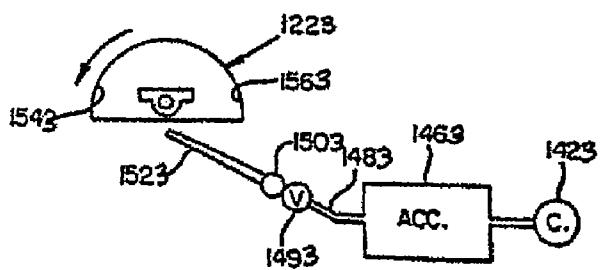


FIG. 71



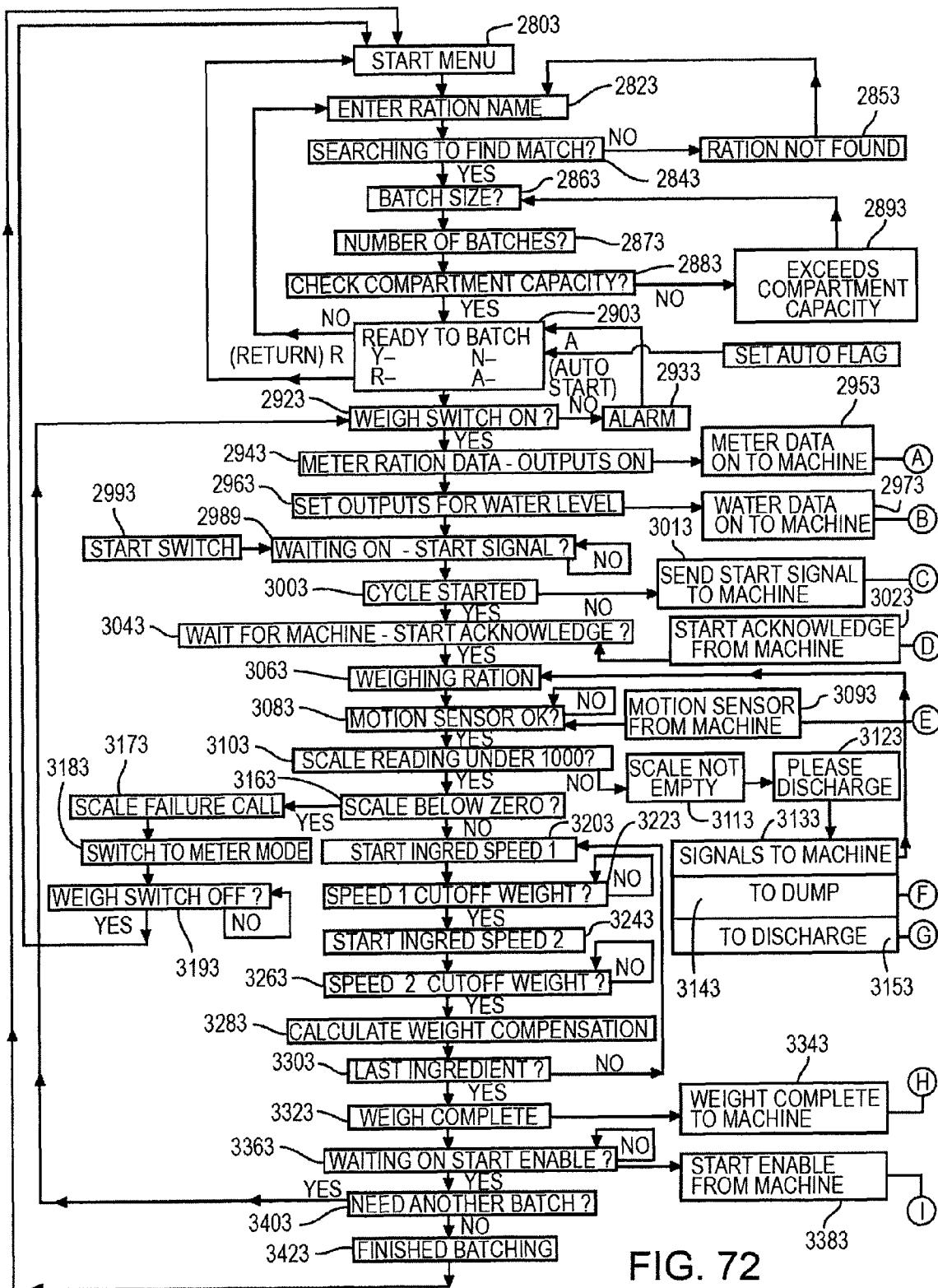


FIG. 72

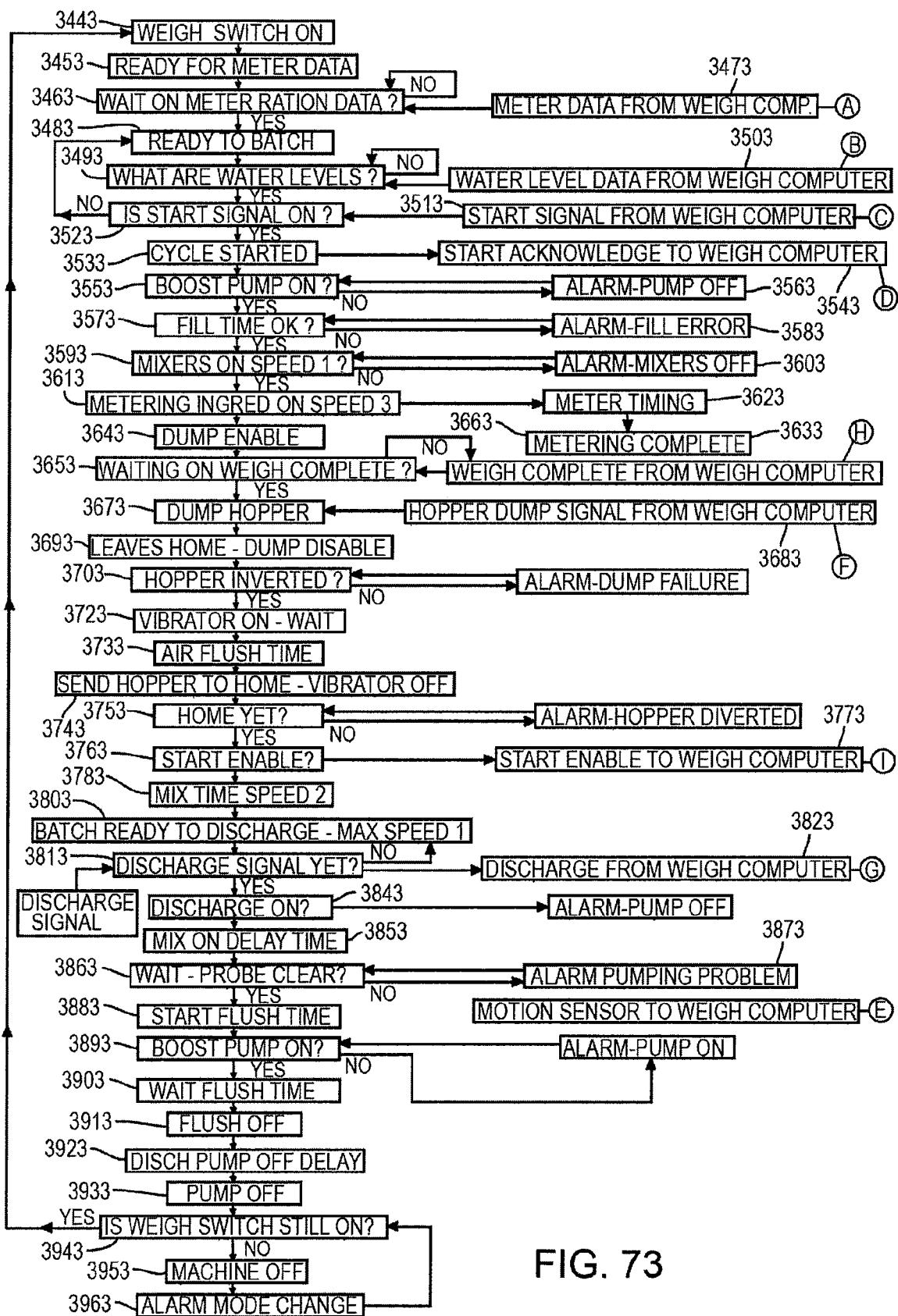


FIG. 73

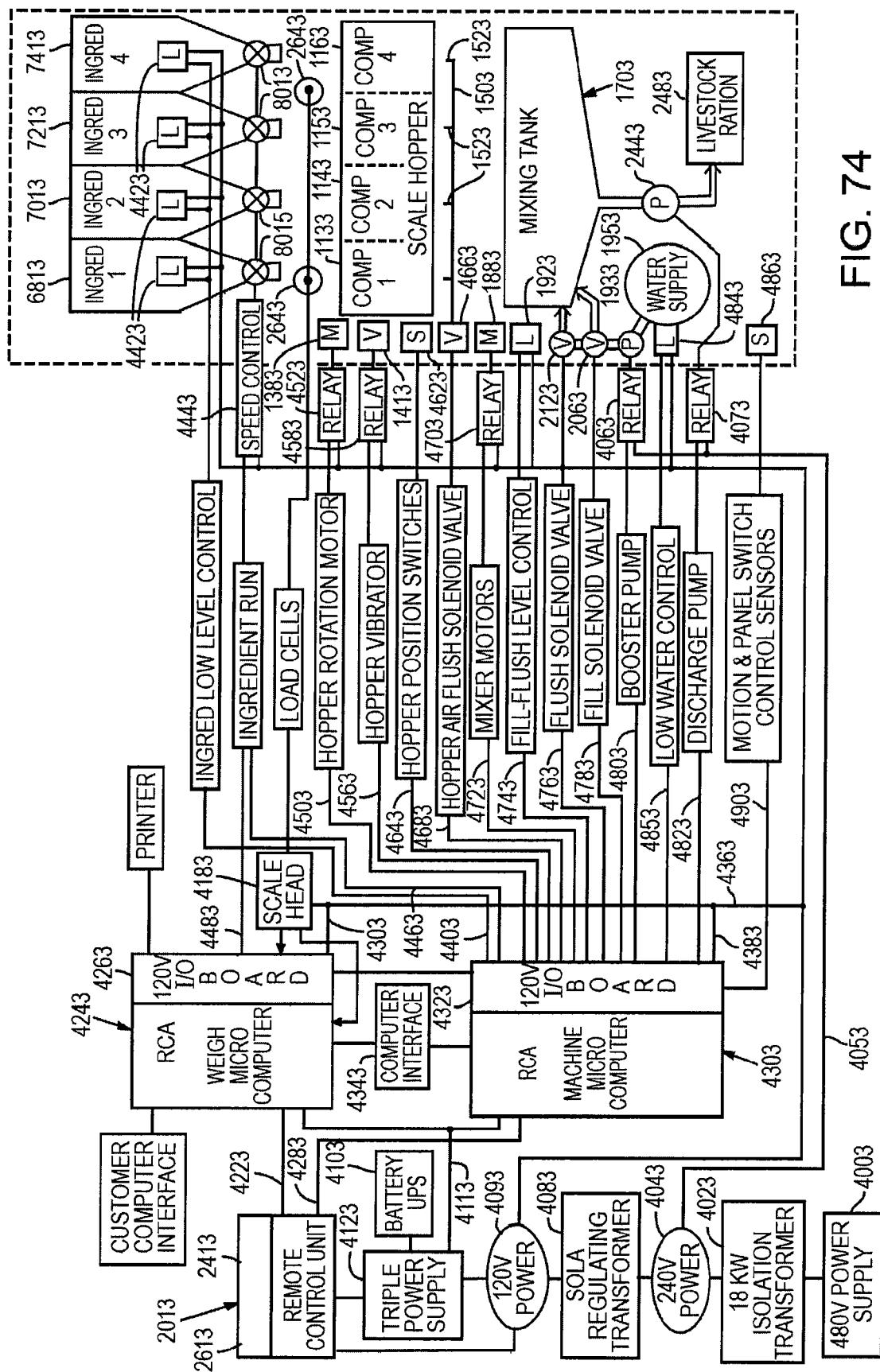


FIG. 74

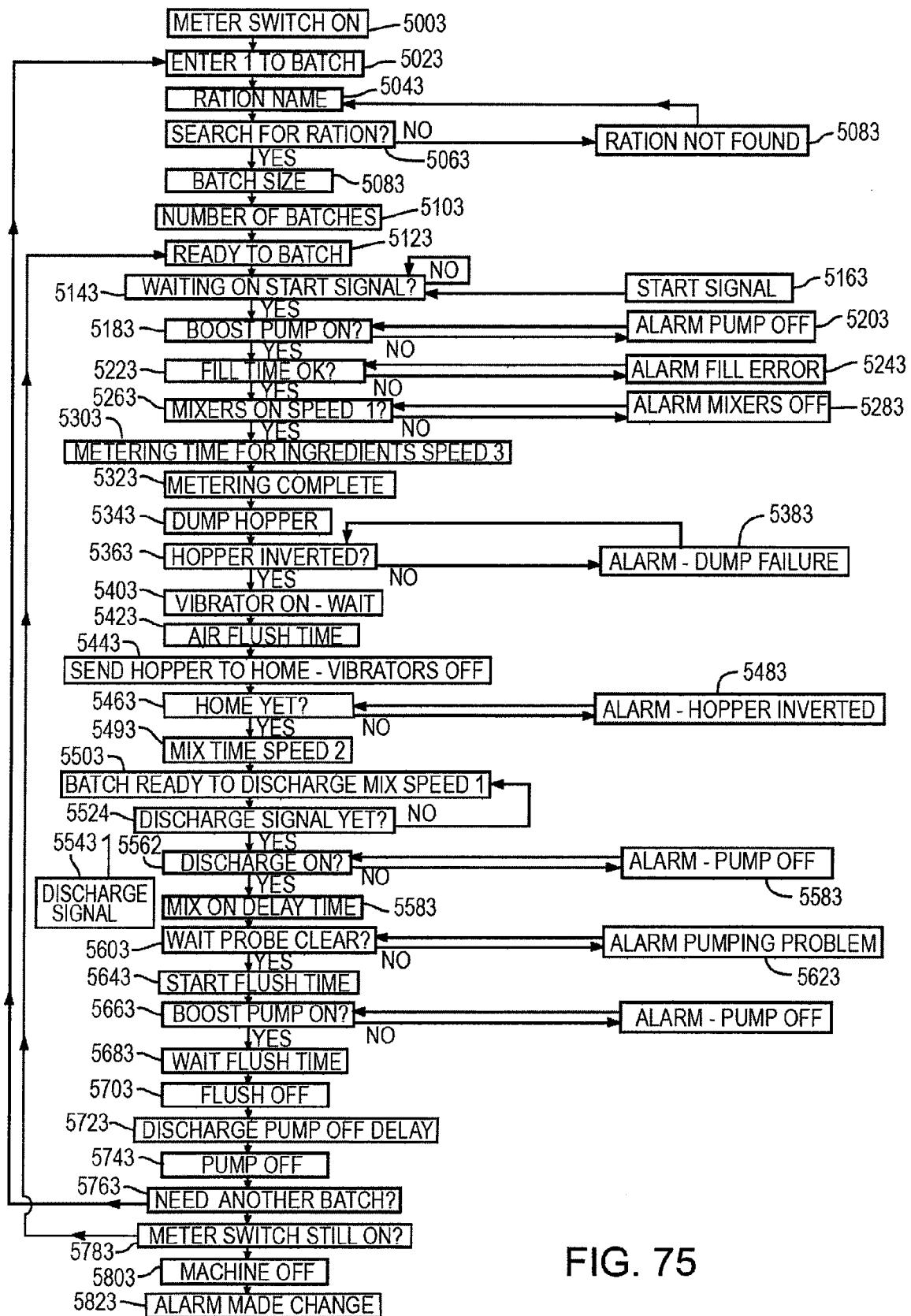


FIG. 75

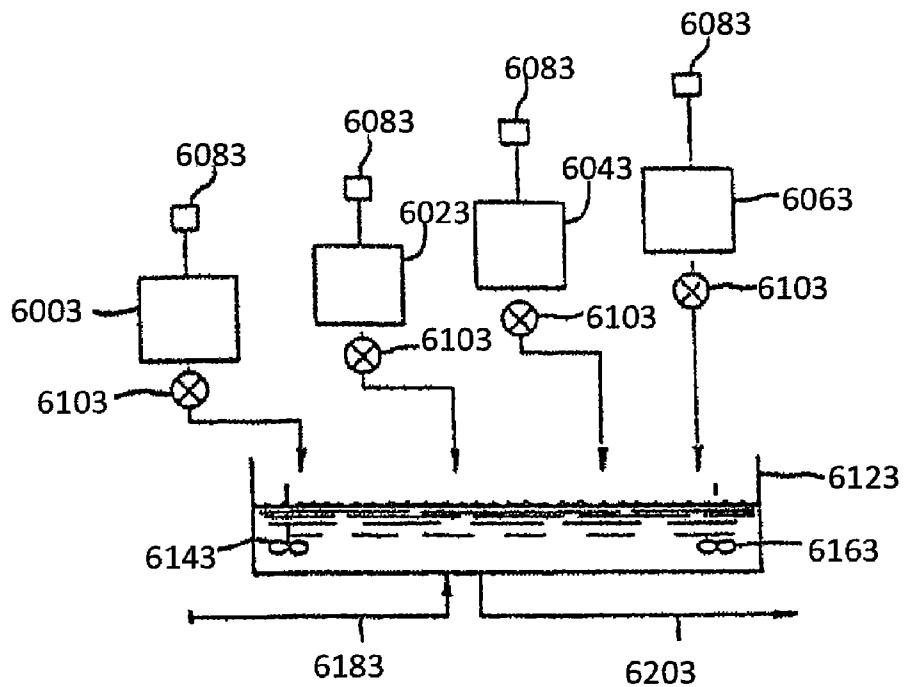
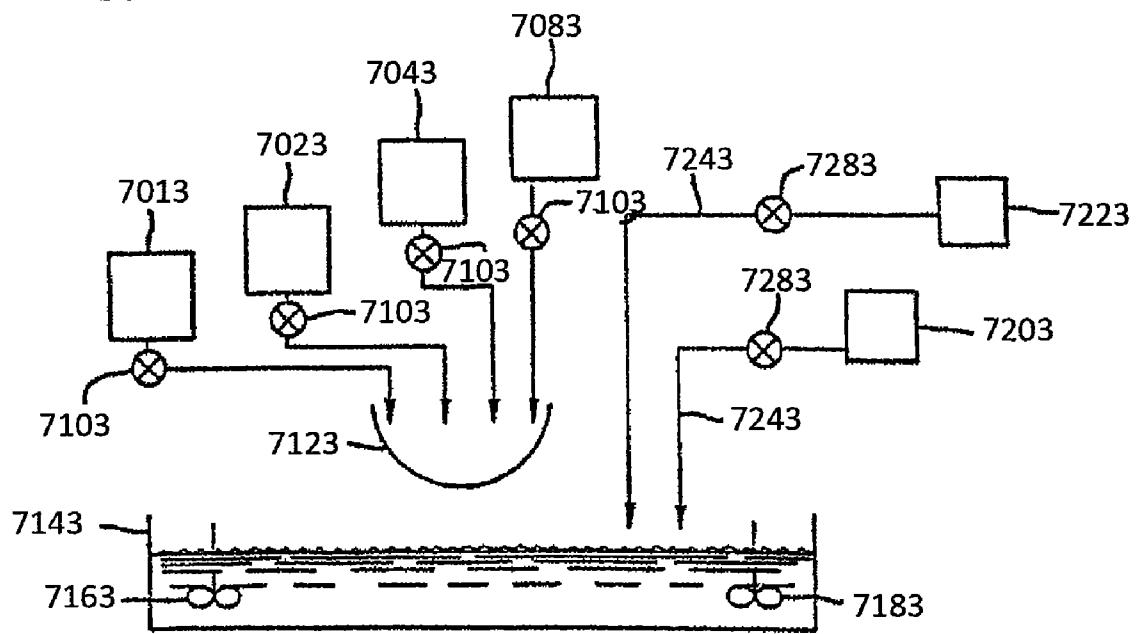
FIG. 76**FIG. 77**

FIG. 78

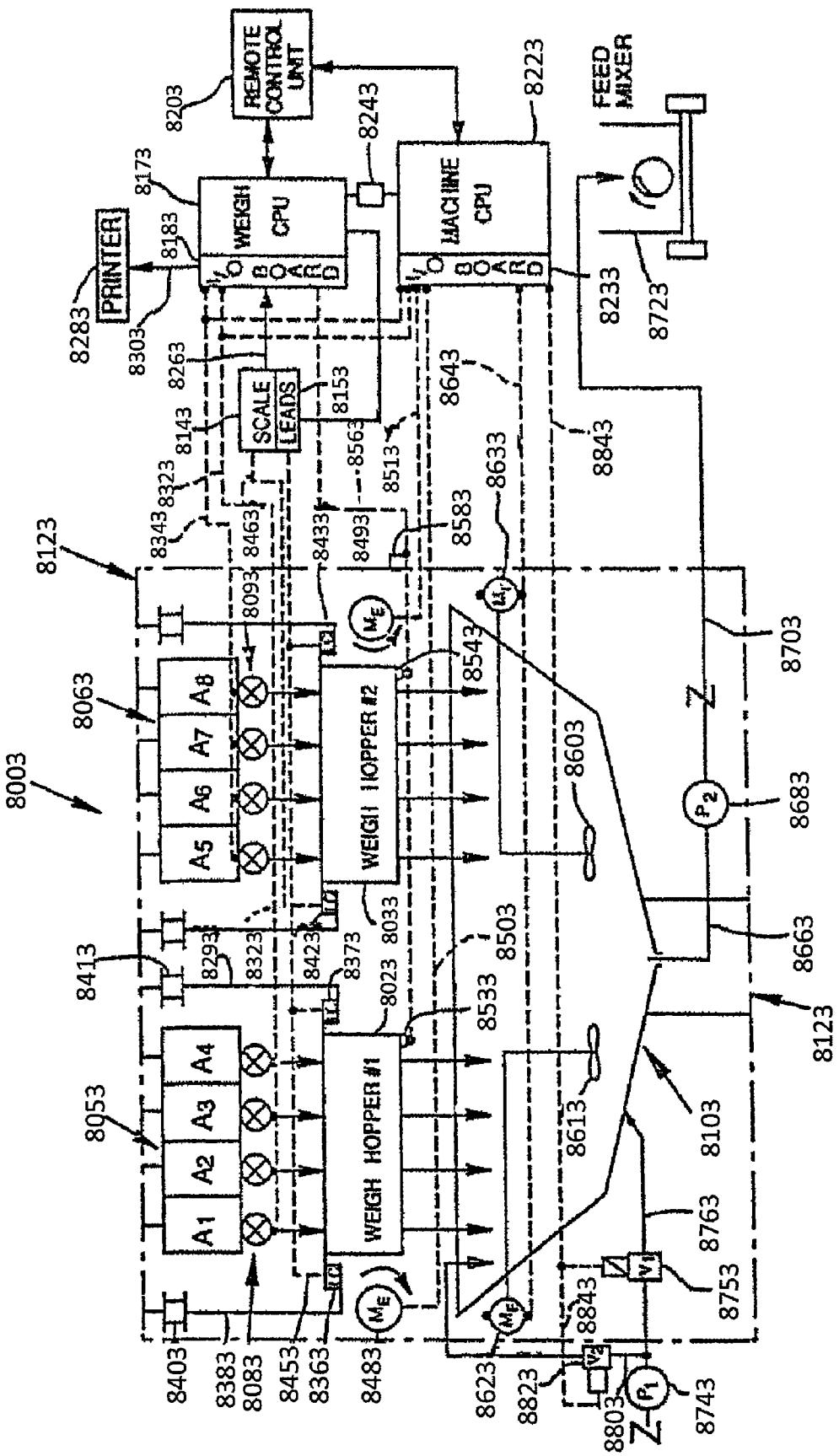


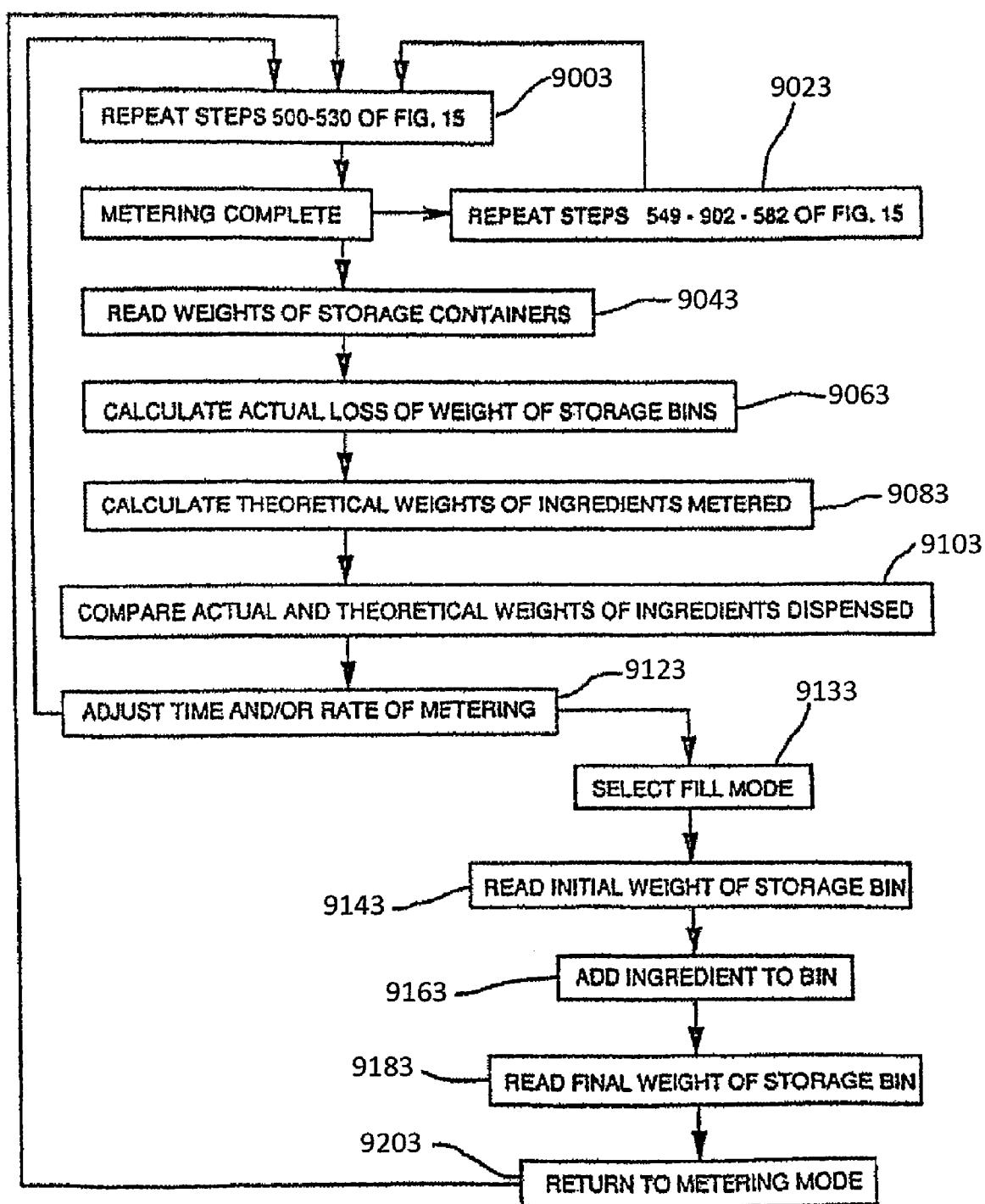
FIG. 79

FIG. 80

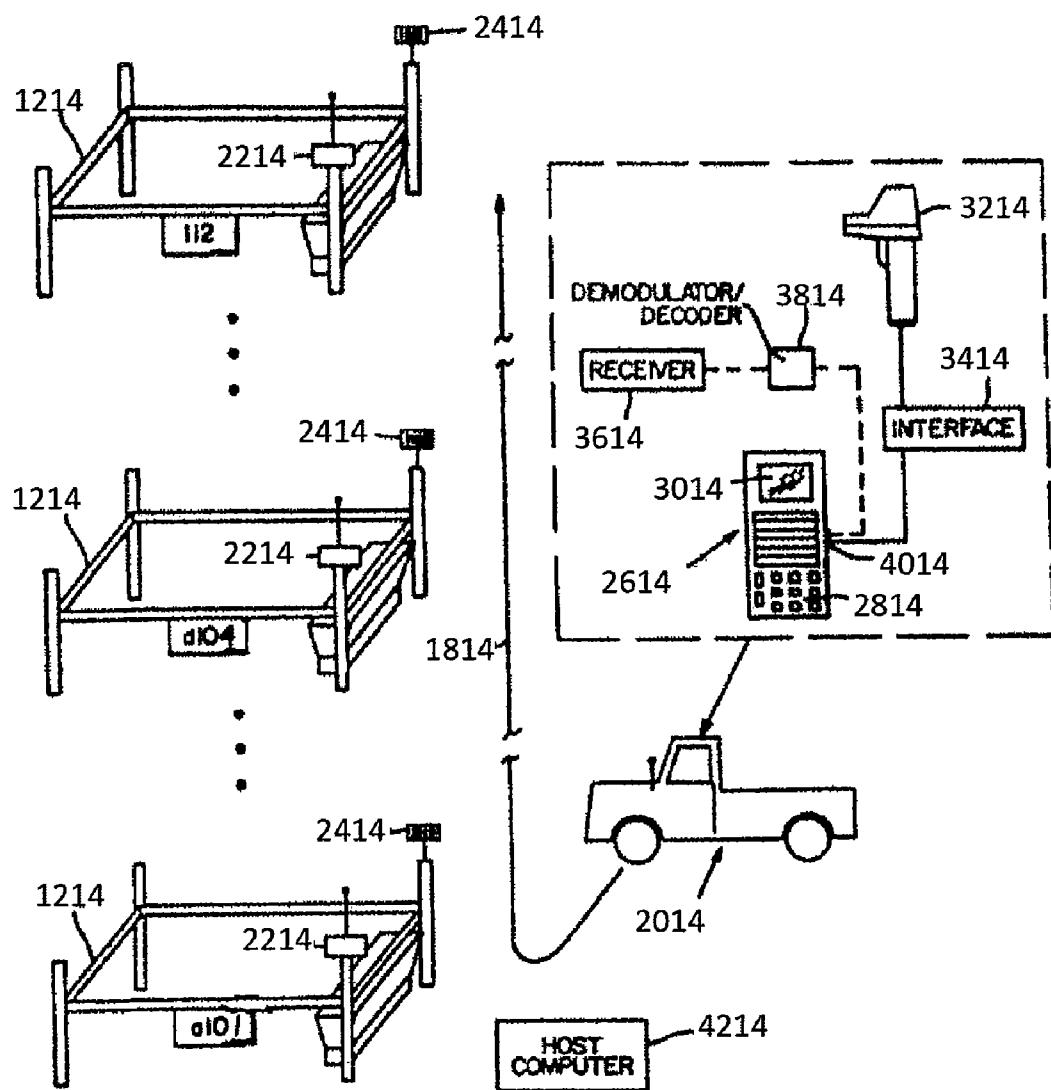


FIG. 81

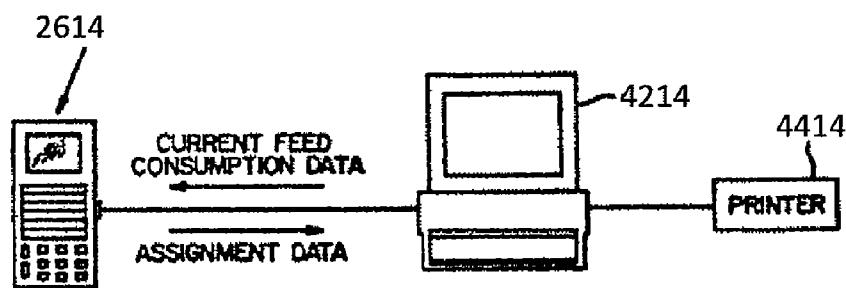


FIG. 82A

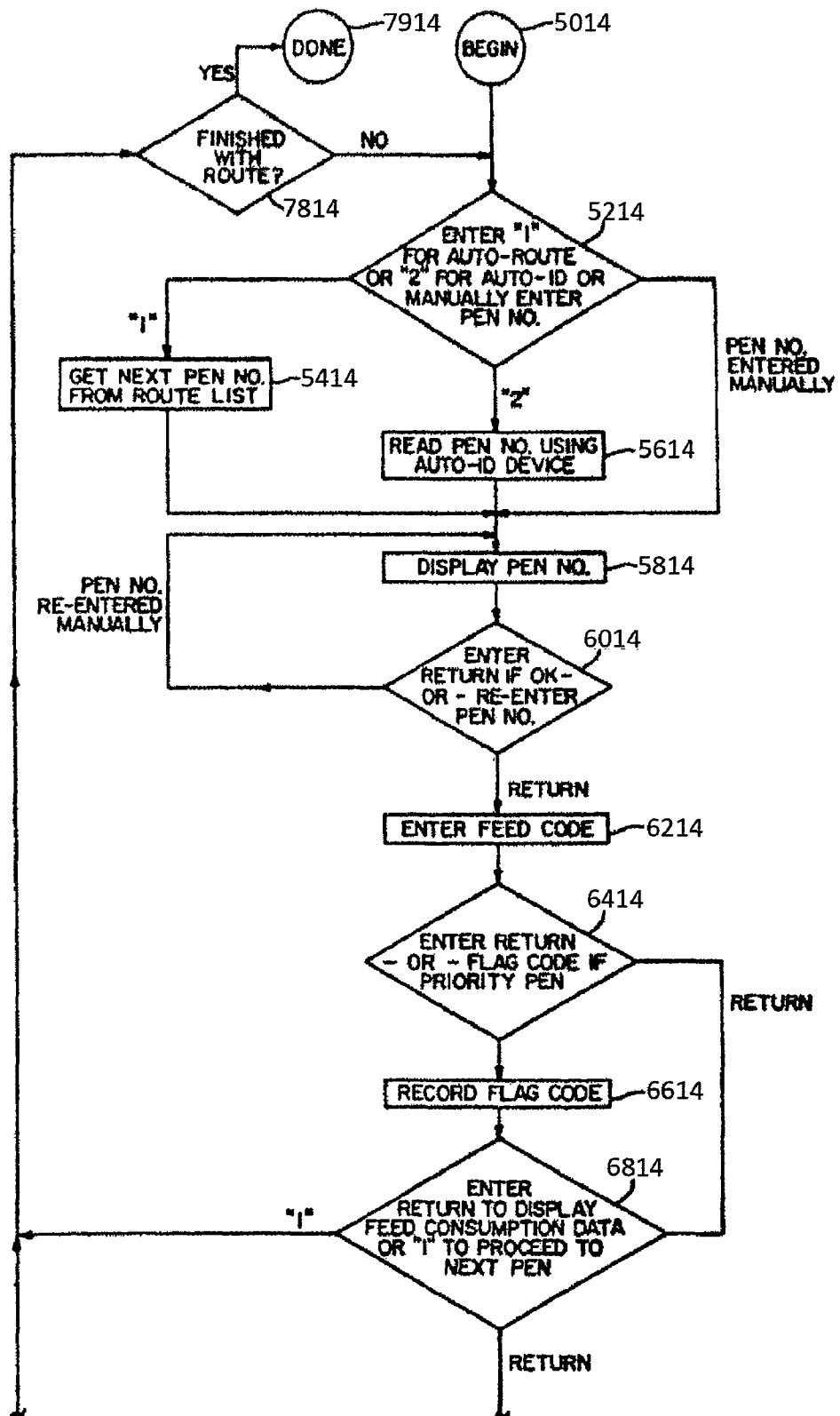


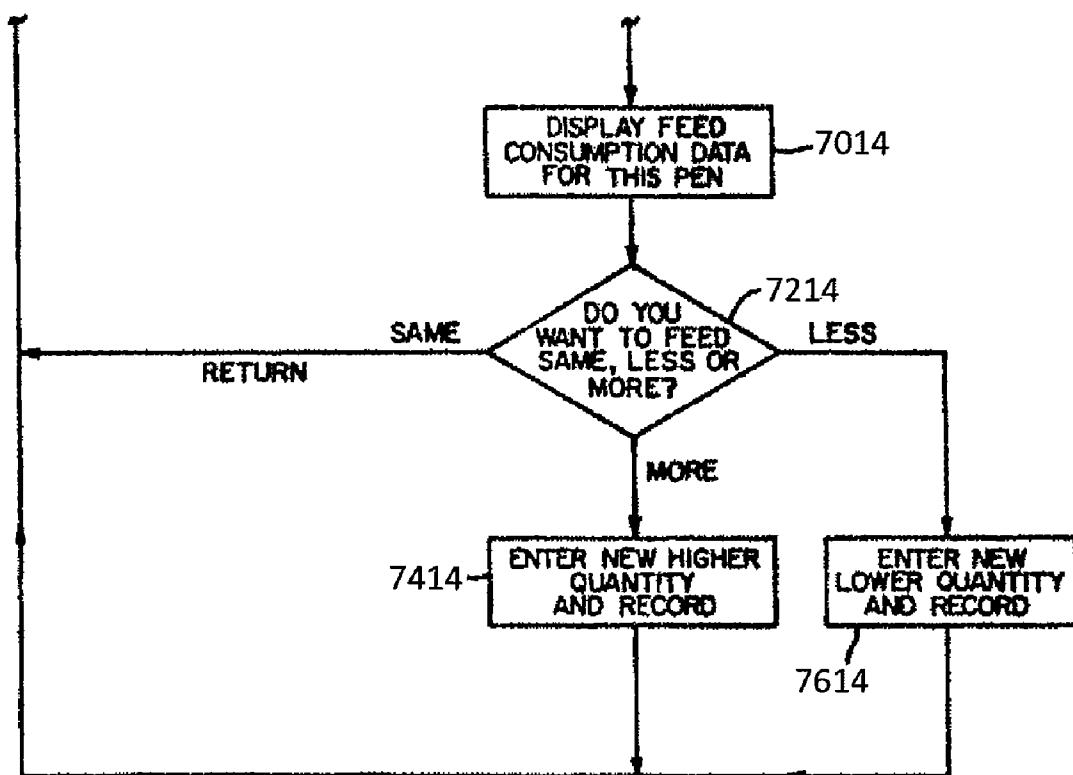
FIG. 82B

FIG. 83

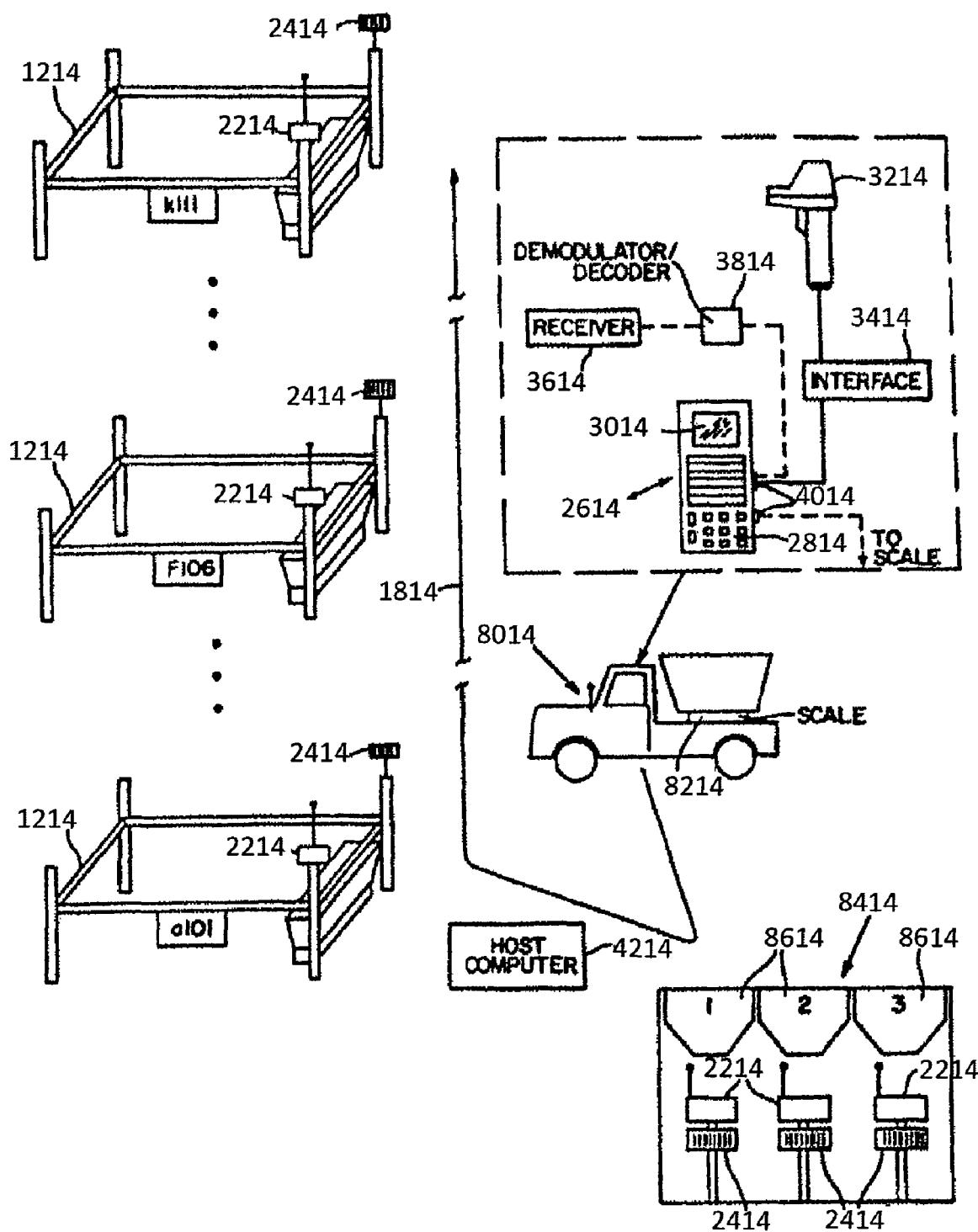


FIG. 84A

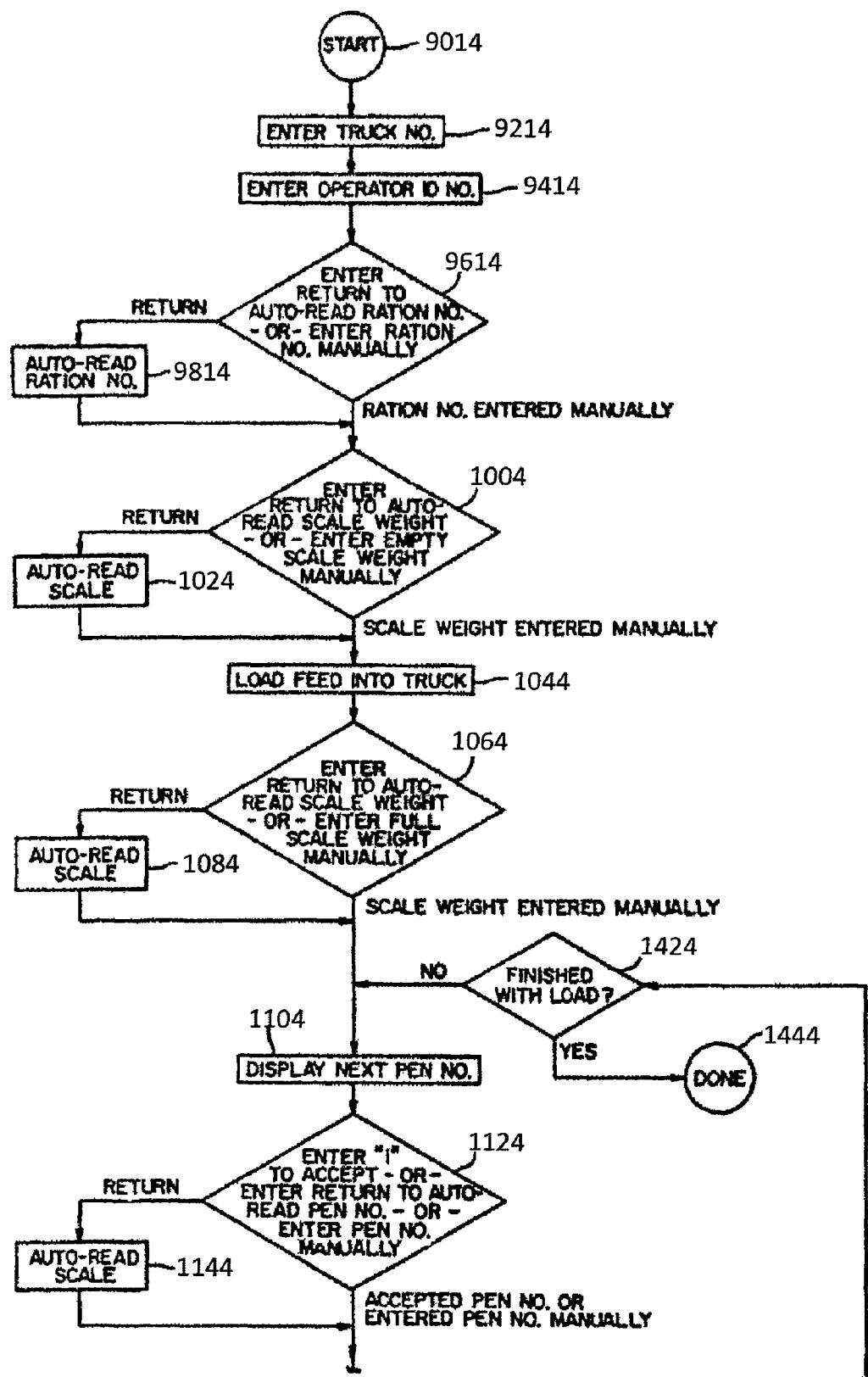
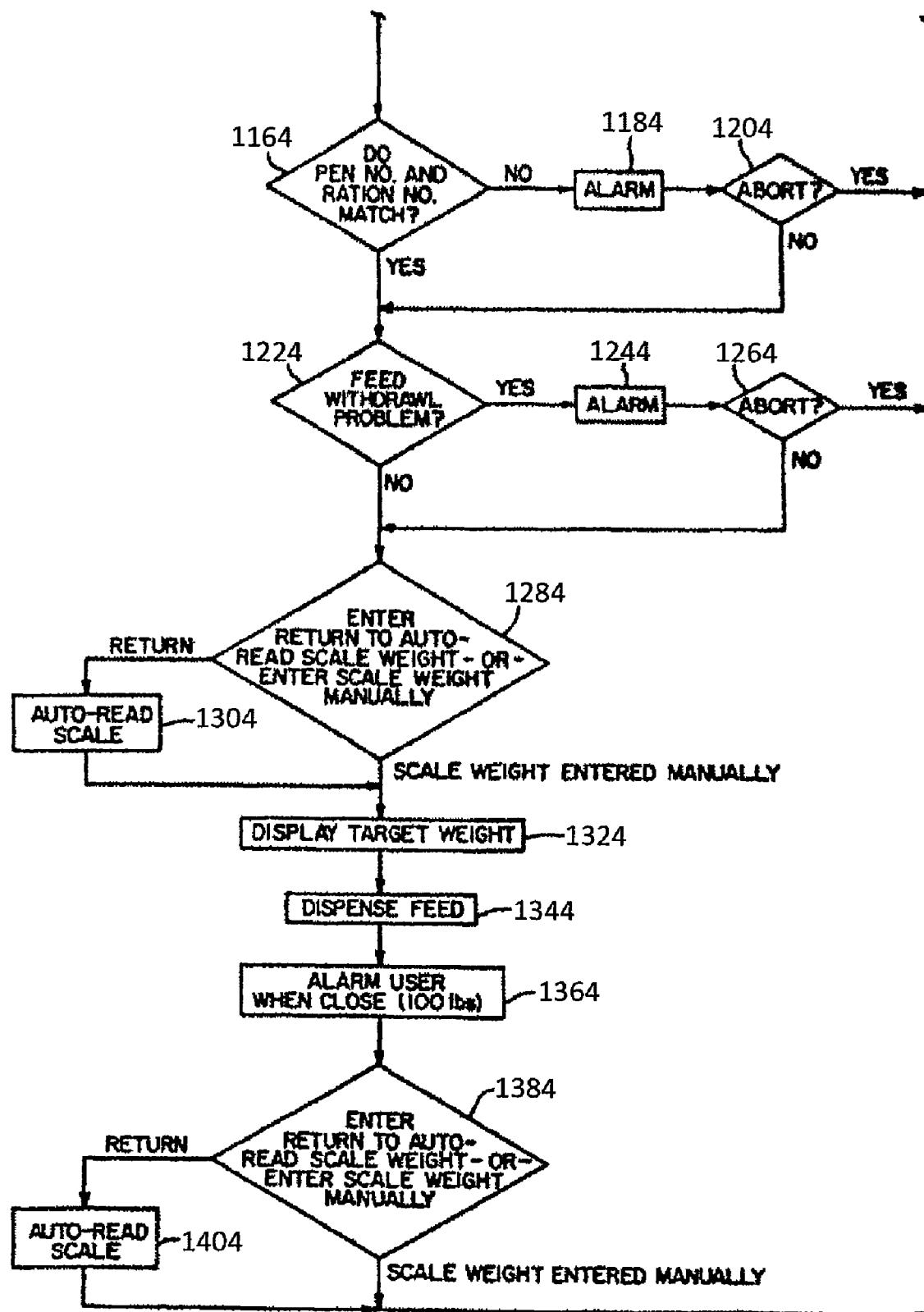


FIG. 84B

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**METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR TRACKING
AND MANAGING ANIMALS AND/OR FOOD
PRODUCTS**
**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS**

This is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/425,286, filed Apr. 16, 2009 now U.S. Pat. No. 7,836,850, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/336,638, filed Jan. 19, 2006, now issued as U.S. Pat. No. 7,681,527, which claims the benefit of the earlier filing date of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/645,462, filed Jan. 19, 2005, all of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD

The present disclosure concerns embodiments of a method and system, particularly a computerized data management method and system, for securely collecting, storing and providing information concerning food animals, including, but not limited to: animal feed information, animal location information, drug treatment information, and/or information concerning food products made from such animals.

BACKGROUND

Currently, the beef industry is the largest sector of the agriculture economy of the United States. The industry includes nearly one million cattle producers. Many people envision the beef industry comprising expansive ranches and large cattle herds. In reality, the herd size of the average beef producer is less than 35 animals. Because of the sheer number of producers and their varying herd sizes, beef producers typically operate their production and marketing practices independently of one another and are rarely aligned with a common downstream specification. Cattle specifications are market descriptors of carcasses and live cattle that establish parameters such as the size, weight, age, sex, and type of feed provided to the animals. Specification details vary widely throughout the industry. As such, the beef supply chain has traditionally operated in an adversarial and segmented marketplace, rendering information sharing difficult.

Nevertheless, approximately 80% of all U.S. beef eventually pass through one of 400 large commercial feedyards, which prepare cattle to be harvested and made into beef products by major packing companies. Notably, these large feedyards generally have the capacity to handle 8,000 or more head of cattle at any given time. Other types of animals raised for meat also generally spend time in commercial feedyards in preparation for slaughter.

Despite advancements in vaccines and other medicines, animals at feedyards may be exposed to and/or spread diseases that are harmful to people. In December 2003, the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or "mad cow" disease was reported in the U.S. Mad cow disease is a brain disease that kills cattle and may be transmitted to people who eat meat from infected cattle.

Concern over mad cow disease and other animal diseases that may affect people, particularly those labeled "foreign animal diseases" (FADs), have caused consumers to demand additional food safety and traceability assurances. These demands have served as a catalyst among food retailers to encourage, and in some cases mandate, that suppliers provide detailed information on the source of their products. For example, major retailers such as McDonalds®, Wal-Mart® and others have recently announced goals to require their beef

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supply to be fully traceable to the herd of origin. Doing so protects individuals from disease and allows potentially infected cattle to be treated in a manner appropriate to the situation. Treatment of diseased cattle can include treatment with suitable drugs, quarantine, and, if necessary, slaughter to prevent the disease from spreading further.

The lack of a fully traceable system has cost the beef industry billions of dollars. Other livestock industries also have suffered. When a diseased animal is discovered, there currently is no way to properly identify animals that have been intimately associated with the diseased animal so as to require appropriate treatment in a complete and timely manner. Thus, every animal is suspected of being infected with the disease and is treated in a like manner. Ultimately, the discovery of even a single diseased animal can affect an entire livestock industry.

For example, as a result of a case of mad cow disease in a U.S. cow, U.S. beef exports were ceased to many countries. This caused the beef industry to lose approximately \$4.5 billion in export revenues. While the U.S. produces the safest beef supply in the world, international trade policy and consumer fears demand that every precaution be in place to ensure that the transmission of animal diseases is mitigated. Thus, a fully traceable system would be useful to identify the individual animals and groups that have commingled with a diseased animal. Then, only those animals that are diseased or have shared a location with the infected animal need be quarantined. Other healthy animals would still be available to move normally in commerce, e.g., to be bought, sold, shipped, etc.

Hence, there is a need for an animal tracking system that takes advantage of current commercial systems, is cost-effective, and adds value to the process. There also is a need for methods and systems for tracking animal movement in the normal stream of commerce, while protecting the confidentiality of collected data and insuring the accuracy of the collected data.

SUMMARY

Disclosed herein are embodiments of an Animal Identification Framework (AIF) that may address some or all of the deficiencies of systems proposed by the U.S. government, such as the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) proposed within the United States Animal Identification Plan (USAIP). Although some form of tracking system is needed, the proposed government-controlled system regulates the movement of essentially the entire healthy food animal population and thus risks impeding the normal movement of animals in commerce. Without the proper functionality, the NAIS could fail implementation and/or substantially reduce the efficiency of the food supply chain.

Some disclosed embodiments incorporate computerized data management to timely track the location of animals. For example, some embodiments provide real-time, data management capability while protecting the confidentiality of certain data, all without interfering with typical animal commerce. In fact, some embodiments provide animal information that aids commerce, such as by improving the movement and merchandising of animals. In addition, certain embodiments allow the use of multiple animal identifiers, as opposed to the single animal identifier proposed by the NAIS. These identifiers and other data can be associated with a single database animal identifier for each animal. The animal identifiers can be encoded into physical devices and/or be physical characteristics associated with the animals. Examples of such devices include RFID tags, RFID implants, RFID boluses,

visual devices, bar code devices, other useful devices now known or hereafter discovered, and combinations of such devices. Examples of physical characteristics include brands, retinal scans, DNA profiles, other useful physical characteristics now known or hereafter discovered, and combinations of such physical characteristics. Certain embodiments also allow distinguishing between animals that may have occupied a particular location. For example, animals that were not intimately associated with a particular diseased animal can be distinguished from animals that were potentially intimately associated with the diseased animal. It may be possible, therefore, to avoid the cost of treating the former group. In contrast, the NAIS does not allow for positive identification of only those animals from a given location that need to be investigated or treated.

The NAIS requires implementing a completely new governmentally-controlled system rather than utilizing existing systems currently in use. It also fails to make efficient use of infrastructure currently in place. Certain disclosed embodiments utilize known systems and infrastructure in various new combinations and in combinations with new methods and systems. Thus, many of the disclosed embodiments can be adopted without undue expense.

Some embodiments can potentially enable commercial economic benefits to industry from identification, tracking, management and process control to improve profits while protecting confidentiality and encouraging participation in the AIF. Overall, the disclosed embodiments may provide more accurate real-time identification, communication and recording of data for healthy animals and potentially problematic animals. This helps preclude a complete shut down of the food animal industry supply chain and helps prevent mistakes that impede normal animal commerce.

According to a first aspect, embodiments of the system and method described herein may allow health officials to implement a suitable strategy concerning animals that have commingled with a diseased animal in a manner sufficient to potentially transfer the disease, thereby reducing the chance that consumers will consume unhealthy or unsafe animal products. For example, if a cow is diagnosed with a disease, the tools and techniques of the disclosed AIF can be used to trace and ascertain the animal's location history. Based on that information, other animals that have commingled with or occupied a common location with the diseased animal can be examined, quarantined, slaughtered or otherwise treated for the same disease.

According to a second aspect, some embodiments of the system and method described herein may include collecting and organizing data in a secure framework that makes it possible to share official data and non-official data among the diverse and segmented portions of the livestock industries. Moreover, these tools and techniques make it possible for public and government entities to access official data by serving as a buffer between commercial animal information systems and government sponsored systems. For example, a filter tool may be used to screen non-official data from official data before releasing the official data to an official database or to a public or government entity.

According to a third aspect, some embodiments of the system and method include collecting, organizing, and storing information regarding the movement of animals. These techniques and tools have the potential to dramatically improve the ability of animal producers and other entities to trace an animal's movements and/or locations without releasing all animal data to a government-controlled system. Tools and techniques can be used to screen data from public and government entities. Upon request from a public or govern-

ment entity, certain portions of the data may be released to allow health officials to identify and treat animals that have commingled with diseased animals in a manner appropriate for a particular disease. For example, when an animal is discovered with an animal disease, such as a foreign animal disease, health officials within the government may request access to the location history of the animal. Based on location identifiers, tools and techniques described herein can be used to generate a report listing animals that have commingled with the diseased animal. With that information, government and health officials can implement a strategy for minimizing the effects of the diseased animal on human health and commerce.

To implement the disclosed AIF, new and old technology can be combined. For example, some descriptions of potentially-useful technology appear in the documents listed below.

U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,733,971, 4,815,042, 4,889,433, 5,219, 224, 5,340,211 and RE34,776 disclose methods and apparatuses for providing feed and feed additives to animals. These patents are incorporated herein by reference. Some disclosed embodiments concern apparatuses that store additive concentrates separately until just prior to use, then, on demand, dispense the additive concentrates separately and sequentially into a weigh hopper for sequential, cumulative weighing therein. Embodiments of the apparatus also can be used to dispense some additive concentrates by weight and others by volume into a mixing vessel.

U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,910,024, 5,369,032 and 5,401,501 disclose methods and apparatuses for maintaining and administering live probiotic to animals as feed. These patents are incorporated herein by reference. Certain embodiments include preparing a concentrated suspension of anaerobic bacteria at a known, accurate concentration and storing the prepared suspension, potentially for prolonged periods, in a ready-to-use condition without significant loss of viability. This allows operators to conveniently administer such bacterial supplements to animals as a probiotic on a regular basis in accurate dosages.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,008,821 discloses a computerized process and system for assigning and delivering feed to animals in a feedlot. This patent is incorporated herein by reference. Some of the disclosed system embodiments include a portable computer for recording assignment data for each cattle pen and a host computer that stores information, such as feed-consumption data, for each of the plurality of cattle pens in the feedlot.

U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,315,505, 5,803,906, 6,547,726 and 6,592, 517 disclose methods and systems for providing animal health histories and tracking inventory of drugs. These patents are incorporated herein by reference. Certain disclosed embodiments include providing improved drug treatment to selected animals in a retained group using a computer system. Other disclosed embodiments include a computer-based system for providing up-to-date health histories of animals, for example, in a feedlot. The system can include indicia elements associated with each animal for identifying the animal and a data entry device coupled to a computer for reading the indicia elements to identify the animal to the computer.

U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,573,002, 5,836,880, 6,200,210 and 6,579, 236 disclose methods and apparatuses for measuring internal tissue characteristics in feed animals. These patents are incorporated herein by reference. Some of the disclosed embodiments can be used, for example, to measure backfat and rib eye dimensions, obtain ultrasound images and determine rib eye area and marbling using measured tissue characteristics. This data can then be used to perform grading calculations, such as to determine quality and/or yield grades.

U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,673,647, 6,000,361, 6,135,055, 6,318, 289, 6,516,746 and 6,805,075 disclose cattle management methods and systems. These patents are incorporated herein by reference. Some of the disclosed embodiments are highly automated methods and systems for identifying individual animals (e.g., using electronic identification) and specification measurements at a low cost. Also disclosed are techniques for collecting and storing animal-related data.

U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,131,744 and 6,736,272 disclose systems and methods for recycling identification tags. These patents are incorporated herein by reference. Certain embodiments include recyclable tags that can be used with embodiments of the method and system disclosed in the present application.

U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/292,412, discloses a method and system for determining the respiratory or circulatory health condition of animals for improved management. This patent application is incorporated herein by reference. Certain embodiments include imaging the internal organs, particularly the lungs, of animals and using information from this imaging to make management decisions regarding the animals.

Collectively, the above-referenced patents and application will be referred to herein as the "MicroBeef patent documents." Certain embodiments of the Microbeef patent documents concern methods and systems implemented at feedlots or packing plants, for example. A person of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the methods and systems can be implemented at other locations and integrated with the disclosed embodiments of the present invention.

Some embodiments of the disclosed method include entering into a computer system data relating to individual animals and correlating the data with an identification of the individual animals in the computer system. The data can, for example, be data for animals commingled from different locations. The identification of each animal can be entered into the computer system from a physical identifier for the animal enabling the computer system to identify each animal and distinguish it from every other animal in a group. The data entered into the computer system also can include location data for identified individual animals for a location or locations occupied by the identified animals. The location data can include, for example, location data generated by a GPS device. The location data for each animal can be correlated in the computer system with the animal identifications.

After the data has been entered, a user can be allowed to review a record for an identified animal that includes a location identifier for the present location of the animal and that the identified animal occupied a previous location without disclosing a previous location identifier. In some embodiments, the user is allowed to review a record for an identified animal that includes a location of the animal, a movement destination location of the animal, and that the animal occupied a previous location without disclosing the previous location identifier. For example, a seller of an identified animal may be allowed to review a record of the identified animal that includes a location identifier for the present location of the animal and that the animal occupied a previous location without disclosing the previous location identifier. The seller may then make available the identification and location data for the identified animal to a buyer. For example, the seller may provide information to a buyer to help the buyer make a purchase decision concerning the identified animal. Similarly, a buyer of an identified animal may be allowed to review a record of the identified animal that includes a location identifier for the seller location of the animal (and/or a location of the animal when owned by a seller) and that the animal occupied a previous location without disclosing the previous

location identifier. A user also may be able to use the data in the computer system to identify a location or locations occupied by an initially identified animal. Then the user may be able to identify in the computer system a subsequently identified animal that shared a location with the initially identified animal.

Some embodiments further comprise entering into the computer system the identification of each animal from a physical identifier selected from the group of an RFID device, 10 retinal scan, DNA profile, visual device, bar code device, brand, and combinations thereof. The RFID device may, for example, be an RFID ear tag, RFID implant, RFID bolus, or combinations thereof. The RFID device also may be recyclable. In some embodiments, multiple identifiers are entered 15 into the computer system for the identified animal. The multiple identifiers can include, for example, an RFID device, a visual device and a DNA profile.

In some embodiments, confidential information can be filtered from data entered into the computer system to enable 20 a user to review a filtered record. The confidential information can include, for example, a previous location identified for an identified animal. In these embodiments, the computer system may allow a user to determine from data in the computer system that an initially identified animal occupied a prior 25 location or locations without disclosing a prior location identifier. Then, a subsequently identified animal can be identified that shared a location with the initially identified animal. For example, a user may be allowed to review a record for an identified animal that includes a location of the animal, a 30 movement destination location of the animal, and that the animal occupied a previous location without disclosing the previous location identifier.

Embodiments of the disclosed method also can include 35 transmitting data associated with an animal to the computer system comprising at least an animal identifier. The data can be transmitted, for example, from a physical identifier, such as an RFID device ear tag, a retinal scan, a DNA profiler, a visual device, a bar code device, a brand, or a combination thereof. The method also can include collecting the transmitted 40 animal data in the computer system, wherein the animal data is correlated according to the animal identifier. The animal identifier can be associated with a set of previous location identifiers in the computer system, wherein the set of previous location identifiers is associated with a set of previous locations occupied by the animal. A current location identifier also can be associated with the animal identifier in the computer system, wherein the current location identifier uniquely identifies a current location of the animal. The system then 45 may enable a report to be generated to list the current location of the animal and the set of previous locations occupied by the animal, wherein the set of previous location identifiers is filtered. The report may be generated, for example, based on the current location and previous locations occupied by the animal with the current location identifier filtered. A user then 50 may be enabled to review the report. A subsequently identified animal may be identified that shared a location with an initially identified animal. This can be done, for example, by comparing the set of previous location identifiers to a set of location identifiers associated with the subsequently identified animal, correlating a subset of data from the animal data to a subset of data associated with the subsequently identified animal and filtering the set of previous location identifiers and the set of location identifiers associated with the subsequently identified animal. Some embodiments further comprise identifying 55 in the computer system a second subsequently identified animal that shared at least one location with the first subsequently identified animal.

Embodiments of the disclosed system can include a physical identifier to transmit animal data, a data reader to read transmitted animal data from the physical identifier, a data service provider to store received data from the data reader, and a data trustee to receive at least a portion of the animal data from the data service provider and to filter confidential information from the received data. Some embodiments also include a GPS device for transmitting location data for an identified animal. The animal data can include, for example an animal identifier. In some embodiments, the data service provider adds to the animal data a premises identifier that corresponds to a location and the data service provider correlates the animal data according to the animal identification value. The premises identifier may be allocated by a premises allocator. The data trustee may reconcile the premises identifier against a premises identifier repository. Similarly, the data trustee may reconcile the animal identifier against an animal identification repository. In some embodiments, the data trustee maintains a database, such as a secured database.

The data trustee may generate a trace report based on the received animal data and may apply a filter to the received animal data to screen the confidential information. The trace report may, for example, list official data, such as locations that an animal has occupied without disclosing the premises identifier. The trace report may be accessible to be reviewed by users, such as buyers or sellers. The trace report also can be correctable. For example, some embodiments of the system include a web-based interface for correcting the trace report. The system also can include a public-accessible storage center to which the data trustee sends official data.

The data trustee may generate a variety of reports. For example, the data trustee may generate a report identifying in the computer system a subsequently identified animal that shared a location with an initially identified animal. The data trustee also may generate a confirmation report upon receipt of the received data.

Some additional embodiments are directed to controlling the spread of diseases, such as foreign animal diseases, such as mad cow disease. These embodiments may include requesting a trace report from a data trustee upon discovering a diseased animal, generating a trace report that filters confidential information and identifying location of animals that have commingled with the diseased animal. A treatment strategy then can be implemented for animals that have commingled with the diseased animal. The treatment strategy can comprise, for example, treating the disease, quarantining the animals, slaughtering the animals, or a combination thereof. Requesting a trace report from the data trustee can include determining an animal identifier for the diseased animal, performing a data look-up in a public sector database to retrieve a data record address that stores diseased animal data and retrieving the diseased animal data from the data trustee using the data record address. Generating the trace report can include performing a search on official and non-official data stored at the data trustee for location history data, wherein the search is performed using the animal identifier of the diseased animal, compiling the location history data for the diseased animal, comparing the location history data of the diseased animal to the other animals, generating a report of shared locations wherein the diseased animal commingled with others, and filtering non-official information from the report.

Some additional embodiments are directed to creating a buffer between commercial animal information systems and government sponsored animal systems. Such embodiments can include collecting animal data, distinguishing the animal data into official and non-official data, storing non-official data in a secure environment and implementing security pro-

cedures to protect the non-official data. Additional embodiments can include gathering location data for locations occupied by individual animals using RF triangulation or trilateration devices associated with the individual animals, entering or transmitting the location data into a computer system and correlating the location data with identifiers for the individual animal. The RF triangulation or trilateration devices can be GPS devices and may be integrated with physical identification devices associated with the individual animals.

Additional features and advantages of the invention will be made apparent from the following detailed description of implementations that proceeds with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a national animal identification system (NAIS).

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an infrastructure for assigning premises identifiers.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of infrastructure for assigning animals universal identifiers.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of an animal identification framework (AIF) for tracing animal locations.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of a data service provider for receiving, storing, and reporting animal information.

FIGS. 6A-D are sample lists illustrating the type of data sent in a trace report.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a data trustee for screening confidential information from received animal information.

FIG. 8 is a flowchart illustrating a technique filtering confidential data.

FIG. 9 is a table illustrating a trace report.

FIG. 10 is a flowchart illustrating a technique for tracing an animal's location history.

FIG. 11 is a flowchart illustrating a technique identifying diseased animals.

FIG. 12 is a schematic diagram of the layout of the single-file cattle processing chute and sorting pen portion of a feedlot.

FIG. 13 is a schematic diagram of the layout of a pen sorter including feed pens, water pens and shipping pens for a feedlot.

FIG. 14 is a cattle processing timeline to exemplify a method of processing and managing cattle.

FIGS. 15A, 15B, and 15C are cattle processing diagrams illustrating three alternative methods of processing and managing cattle in a feedlot.

FIG. 16 is an enlarged schematic diagram of the single-file measuring chute and adjacent sorting pens similar to those shown in FIG. 12, but on an enlarged scale and showing schematically a control means for controlling the operation thereof.

FIG. 17 is a block diagram of the computerized control system.

FIG. 18 is a cattle processing diagram but in considerably greater detail than those of FIGS. 15A, 15B and 15C.

FIG. 19 is a data flow block diagram illustrating the data flow in a computerized control system.

FIG. 20A is an enlarged schematic diagram of the get ready stall of the single-file chute shown in FIGS. 12 and 16, including the locations of sensors used in such stall.

FIG. 20B is a flow diagram of the computer program used to operate the entrance (tail) gate and exit (head) gate in conjunction with the sensors of FIG. 20A for the get ready station.

FIG. 21A is an enlarged schematic diagram of the video and EID/scale stations of the single-file chute shown in FIGS. 12 and 16, showing the locations of sensors used in operating the tail and head gates for the EID/scale station.

FIG. 21B is a flow diagram of the computer program used to control the operations of the tail and head gates for the EID/scale station of FIG. 21A in conjunction with the sensors of such station.

FIG. 22A is an enlarged schematic diagram of the ultrasound station portion of the single-file chute shown in FIGS. 12 and 16 showing the locations of sensors used in operating the control gates for such station.

FIG. 22B is a flow diagram of a computer program used to control the operation of the tail gate and head gate of the ultrasound station of FIG. 22A in conjunction with the sensors for such station.

FIG. 23A is an enlarged schematic diagram of the processing station of the single-file chute of FIGS. 12 and 16 showing the location of sensors for operating the control gates of such station.

FIG. 23B is a flow diagram of a computer program used to control the operation of the tail gate and head gate for the processing station of FIG. 23A in conjunction with the sensors at such station.

FIG. 24A is an enlarged schematic diagram of the sort pen entrance gates for the sort pens shown in FIG. 16.

FIG. 24B is a flow diagram of a computer program used to control the operation of the entrance gates to the sort pens of FIG. 24A.

FIGS. 25A and 25B are a flow diagram of a computer program used to control the processing sequence for each animal proceeding through the various measuring and processing stations in the single-file chute of FIG. 16.

FIG. 26 is a flow diagram of the overall process control computer program for controlling the operation of the various computer-operated devices and equipment of a cattle management system.

FIG. 27 is a flow diagram of a station initialization computer program for the various measuring and processing stations of the single-file chute shown in FIG. 16.

FIG. 28 is a flow diagram of a computer program used to update the data for each computer-operated measuring apparatus at each measuring and processing station.

FIG. 29 is a flow diagram of a station setup computer program used to prepare each station for the receipt of an animal for measuring and processing.

FIG. 30 is a flow diagram of a computer program used to ensure the capture of an animal within a measuring or processing station before measurements or processes are initiated at the station in the single-file chute shown in FIG. 16.

FIGS. 31A and 31B are a flow diagram of a computer program used for making measurements at the various measuring stations of the single-file chute, including weight, external dimension and internal measurements.

FIG. 32 is a flow diagram of a computer program used for preparing a station or a sort pen for releasing an animal from the station or sort pen to another destination.

FIG. 33 is a flow chart of a computer program used for reading the ultrasound backfat data of an animal at the ultrasound measuring station of the single-file chute shown in FIG. 16.

FIG. 34 is a flow chart of a computer program used to interface the process control and other computers used for collecting data at the various feedlot measuring, processing and sorting stations or pens with the main feedlot business system (FBS) computer so that data can be passed back and

forth between the FBS computer and the various processing computers used in the overall computer control system.

FIG. 35 is a flow diagram of a computer program used for loading station configuration information into the computer system for a particular feedlot cattle management system.

FIG. 36 is a flow diagram illustrating the process and formulas for calculating "Days to Finish," followed by an example calculation based on hypothetical animal measurements.

FIG. 37 is a flow diagram illustrating an alternative method to that of FIG. 36 for calculating "Days to Finish" for an individual animal, followed by an example calculation based on hypothetical measurements of the animal.

FIG. 38 is a flow diagram illustrating the process of determining feed proration to individual animals following a first set of animal measurements in the feedlot.

FIGS. 39A and 39B are a flow chart illustrating the process of determining feed proration to individual animals in a feedlot following a second and subsequent sets of animal measurements in the feedlot.

FIG. 40 is a flow diagram showing how calculations of "Days to Finish" from FIGS. 36 and 37 can be used to create an average "Days to Finish" for projecting when an individual animal will be ready to ship from a feedlot.

FIG. 41 is a graph plotting selling price against animal backfat along two different curves during the time that an animal is on feed in a feedlot.

FIG. 42 is an illustration of a portable hospital unit.

FIG. 43 is a schematic diagram of the portable hospital unit shown in FIG. 42.

FIG. 44 is an illustration of the portable hospital unit in communication with a host computer.

FIG. 45 is a schematic diagram of the animal health computer of FIG. 44.

FIG. 46 is a schematic diagram of an animal health system.

FIGS. 47A-B are flowcharts illustrating programming of the host computer.

FIG. 48A is a flowchart illustrating in more detail a portion of the hospital/processing menu within the programming of the host computer.

FIG. 48B is a flowchart illustrating in more detail a second portion of the hospital/processing menu within the programming of the host computer.

FIG. 49A is a flowchart illustrating a portion of the programming of the portable unit.

FIG. 49B is a flowchart illustrating a second portion of the programming of the portable unit.

FIG. 49C is a flowchart illustrating a third portion of the programming of the portable unit.

FIG. 50 is a schematic diagram showing a complete system of one embodiment of an ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis apparatus.

FIG. 51 is a side, partially disassembled view, illustrating an ultrasound transducer and dispensing handpiece unit.

FIG. 52 is a plan view of the switch unit illustrated in FIG. 51.

FIG. 53 is a front-end view of the switch unit of FIG. 51.

FIG. 54 is an enlarged side view of the handpiece illustrated in FIG. 51.

FIG. 55 is a bottom plan view of the handpiece of FIG. 51.

FIG. 56 is a rear end view of the handpiece illustrated in FIG. 51.

FIG. 57 is a schematic illustrating the switch unit of FIG. 51.

FIG. 58 is a schematic drawing illustrating an operator using an ultrasound tissue analyzer in a packing plant for

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analyzing backfat on a stunned ruminant conveyed to the operator after being stunned and bled.

FIG. 59 is a schematic drawing illustrating an alternative method for measuring internal tissue characteristics of a stunned ruminant using a first operator to apply a conductive liquid to a stunned ruminant conveyed to the first operator after being stunned and bled, and a second operator to take ultrasound measurements on the ruminant following the application of conductive liquid.

FIG. 60 is a schematic diagram illustrating the layout of a packing plant and ruminant tissue analysis locations in the packing plant.

FIG. 61 is a perspective view showing the major components of a feed delivery apparatus.

FIG. 62 is a schematic perspective view illustrating the internal components of the main cabinet shown in FIG. 61.

FIG. 63 is an enlarged, perspective view of a typical foot portion and isolation pad of a support leg of the apparatus of FIG. 61.

FIG. 64 is an enlarged, front elevational view of the main cabinet shown in FIG. 61, the cabinet panels having been removed to show the internal parts of the machine.

FIG. 65 is an enlarged, perspective view of the weigh frame subassembly of the apparatus shown in FIG. 64.

FIG. 66 is an enlarged, fragmentary, perspective view of a load cell in a weigh tower of the weigh frame of FIG. 65, the remainder of the weigh frame being broken away.

FIG. 67 is an enlarged, fragmentary perspective view of a portion of the weigh hopper subassembly of the weigh frame shown in FIG. 65.

FIG. 68 is a fragmentary top perspective view of a dry additive dispensing means portion of the apparatus of FIG. 64, shown mounted on the main frame assembly of FIG. 64.

FIG. 69 is a fragmentary top perspective view of the mixing vessel and associated components of the main frame assembly shown in FIG. 64.

FIG. 70 is a plumbing diagram for the fluid components of the feed delivery apparatus.

FIG. 71 is a schematic view of the air flush system for the weigh hopper portion of the apparatus.

FIG. 72 is a flow diagram illustrating the logic of a computer program which controls the weigh means of the present apparatus.

FIG. 73 is a flow diagram illustrating the logic of a computer program which controls all machine operating sequences and functions other than the weigh functions illustrated in FIG. 72.

FIG. 74 is an electrical control schematic diagram for the illustrated apparatus.

FIG. 75 is a flow diagram illustrating the logic of a computer program which controls alternative volumetric metering and dispensing functions of the illustrated apparatus.

FIG. 76 is a schematic view illustrating a system in which microingredient additive concentrates are dispensed directly into a mixing vessel from individually weighed storage containers.

FIG. 77 is a schematic view illustrating a system in which dry additive concentrates are dispensed by weight into a weigh hopper while liquid additive concentrates are metered by volume directly into the mixing vessel.

FIG. 78 is a schematic view showing a system in which different additive concentrates can be dispensed into different weigh hoppers simultaneously and the different weigh hoppers discharged either independently or simultaneously and either after the weighing of each additive or cumulatively after the cumulative weighing of multiple additives in each hopper.

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FIG. 79 is a flow diagram illustrating the logic of a modification of the computer program of FIG. 75 which controls a hybrid volumetric-weight system of measuring the amounts of microingredients dispensed using apparatus of the general type shown in FIG. 76.

FIG. 80 is a schematic diagram of a system for assigning feed to each feed bunk.

FIG. 81 is a schematic view showing data transfer between the portable and host computer of FIG. 80.

FIGS. 82A and 82B are a flowchart illustrating the computerized operation of the system of FIG. 80.

FIG. 83 is a schematic diagram of a system for delivering feed to each feed bunk.

FIGS. 84A and 84B are a flowchart illustrating the computerized operation of the system of FIG. 83.

DESCRIPTION

Throughout this disclosure, the singular terms "a," "an," and "the" include plural referents unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Similarly, the word "or" is intended to include "and" unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

The following terms may be abbreviated in this disclosure as follows: Advanced Encryption Standard (AES), animal identification framework (AIF), bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), Data Encryption Standard (DES), database management system (DBMS), electronic identification device (EID), Extensible Markup Language (XML), foreign animal disease (FAD), Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), group/lot identifier (GID), global positioning system (GPS), International Data Encryption Algorithm (IDEA), international organization for standardization (ISO), national animal identification system (NAIS), premises identifier (PID), pretty good privacy (PGP), radio frequency (RF), radio frequency identification (RFID), secure hypertext transfer protocol (HTTPS), Structured Query Language (SQL), United States Animal Identification Plan (USAIP), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and universal animal identifier (UAID).

Protecting animal agriculture by safeguarding animal health is vital to the well-being of people everywhere. In fact, protecting animal agriculture promotes human health, provides wholesome, reliable, and secure food resources, mitigates national economic threats, and enhances a sustainable environment. An element of this goal to safeguard animal health in an effective AIF that allows users to quickly and efficiently trace information concerning an animal, including without limitation, an animal's location history, treatment history, such as drug or feed additive administration, food products made from such animal, and any combination of such information. By doing so, diseased animals, those potentially diseased, and/or those animals that have commingled with the diseased animals may be identified and dealt with, e.g., treated, quarantined, or destroyed when necessary. Certain disclosed embodiments concern techniques and tools for implementing such an AIF.

The following provides definitions of certain terms used herein. These definitions are provided to aid the reader, and should not be construed to be narrower than would be understood by a person of ordinary skill in the art.

"Animal," "animals" or "livestock" generally refer to any number of domesticated and/or wild animals such as swine, cattle, horses, bison, goats, sheep, deer, elk, alpaca, llama, poultry animals, fish, etc.

A "cohort" or "cohorts" refers to an animal or animals that occupied a same general location, such as might be identified by a premises identifier, as some other animal or animals, but

not necessarily at the same time. Cohorts can refer to a group of animals occupying a same location, and if one or more of these animals is moved to a second location, then the moved animal now is, or animals are, associated with a second cohort group.

“Commingled” is a subset of the term cohort and generally refers to animals that occupy the same general location at a common time. For example, a first group of animals might be owned by the same owner and pastured separately from a second group. Both the first group and the second group may be referred to as cohorts, particularly if the first and second pasture are identified by the same premises identifier, but are not commingled. Animals in the first group are commingled, and animals in the second group are commingled, but animals of the first group are not commingled with animals of the second group. Commingling also can be considered to occur when animals have unrestrained access to each other. Under the USAIP, a single premises identifier may be used to identify cohorts, but cohorts may not be sufficiently intimately associated so as to warrant treating all animals in the group in the same manner, such as in case of a detected disease. By providing additional animal identifiers, as disclosed in the present application, cohorts in this and other examples can be treated differently.

“Feedlot” can include meat feedlots, dairy feedlots and any other animal feedlots.

“Food products” include, without limitation, meat, milk, poultry, eggs, fat and other animals products.

“Intimately associated” typically refers to animals that are in sufficiently close contact that, for example, transmission of a disease might be inferred. Simply because animals are commingled does not necessarily mean that they are intimately associated. Again by way of example, animals located in a large pasture area may be considered commingled, but may not ever be intimately associated.

“Participants” include, without limitation, producers, grazers, auctions, markets, feedlots, packers, data service providers, data trustees, and others.

I.) United States Animal Identification Plan (USAIP)

Over the last several years, animal industry professionals, academics, and state and federal government representatives have debated the feasibility of implementing a single, nationwide computerized system that utilizes an individual food animal identification tracking and management system. As a result of those debates, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) endorsed most of the USAIP that defines the standards and a framework for implementing and maintaining a phased-in national animal identification system (NAIS). Basically, the USAIP provides one proposed method to enable not only the beef industry but all livestock industries and government officials to perform lifetime traces and disease surveillance on cattle, swine, sheep, and other animals. Tracing animals would allow government officials, animal producers, animal purchasers, and others to determine where an animal has been and what other animals have been in contact with the “traced” animal.

For example, if a cow is diagnosed with mad cow disease, an NAIS would allow government health officials to trace where an animal has been over its entire lifetime and investigate and control the disease. Control can be achieved by any method deemed suitable at the time implemented, including, but not limited to quarantine, treatment or slaughter of animals that have commingled with the diseased animal. The USAIP requires that a complete trace report be obtainable within 48 hours of the initiation of an investigation following the diagnosis of a diseased animal.

The basics of the NAIS proposed under the USAIP are illustrated in FIG. 1. FIG. 1 shows the interaction between the NAIS 1002 and an animal producer 1102. The animal producer 1102 collects data 1112 about his animals and stores that data in a database 1202. The type of data collected by animal producer 1102 varies among animal industries; however, the data typically includes many of the same types of data that are found in a cattle specification. Under the USAIP, that data is supplemented by an official ID tag and may include additional identifiers to help trace a specific animal. For example, to trace an animal’s location history, the USAIP proposes a premises identifier (PID) and a universal animal identifier (UAID) with the animal data 1112. Whenever an animal is moved to a new location, the new location’s PID is linked to the animal’s UAID in a database. By doing so, these identifiers help pinpoint where an animal has been during its lifetime.

Data collection usually begins at the animal producer’s location. As an animal moves in the stream of commerce and passes through data collection points, additional records or information are collected and uploaded to a national animal information database 1302. The national animal information database 1302 receives a complete data record 1212. According to the USAIP, the national animal information database 1302 is accessible to the USDA and other health officials. Thus, when an animal is discovered with an animal disease, such as a FAD, the USDA determines the assigned UAID of the diseased animal and reviews the animal’s records in the national animal information database 1302, which is also the “official database.” Based on recorded PIDs it is possible to generate a trace report 1222 showing where a diseased animal has been. At that point, appropriate measures can be put into effect to prevent those animals that have commingled with the diseased animal, as identified solely by a premises identifier, from entering the marketplace. The USAIP’s goal is to protect people from buying tainted meats and other animal products and to prevent the disease from spreading to other animals.

To put an NAIS in place, the USAIP proposes implementing the following systems: a national premises identification system, an individual animal identification system, and a group/lot identification system.

A.) National Premises Identification System

The national premises identification system assigns a unique number to each premises involved in animal agriculture. Generally, a premises is an identifiable physical location that, in the judgment of animal health officials, area veterinarians, or other designated group, and, when appropriate, in consultation with the affected producer, represents a unique and describable geographic entity (e.g., where activity affecting the health and/or traceability of animals may occur) or represents the producer contact location when extensive grazing operations exist. By assigning a unique identifier to premises, the location history of animals is more easily tracked. The USAIP-proposed premises identifier is a 7-character alphanumerical value, e.g., A123B45.

FIG. 2 is a simple block diagram illustrating the USAIP’s proposed infrastructure for assigning PIDs. Basically, a premises 2102 is required to file a request for a PID with a local government premises system 2202. The local government premises system 2202 contacts a national premises allocator 2302 for a PID 2112. The national premises allocator 2302 assigns a PID 2112 to the premises 2102 and sends it back to the local government premises system 2202. The local government premises system 2202 forwards it to the requesting premises 2102 and to a national premises repository 2402. The USDA has access to all PIDs through the national pre-

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mises repository **2402**. Using the PIDs, the USDA can determine animal location histories. According to the USAIP, the PID **2112** uniquely identifies a premises.

The USAIP's national premises identification system requires states and local governments to identify and validate premises.

B.) Individual Animal Identification System

In conjunction with a premises identifier, the USAIP proposes using an individual animal identification system involving assigning universal identification numbers (UAID) to tags, which are later associated with animals. FIG. 3 is a simple block diagram illustrating the entities involved in this process. The tag manufacturer **3102** first obtains a universal animal identification number (UAID) **3112** from an animal identification number allocator **3202** and manufacturers the tags **3502** with the UAIDs **3112** assigned to the tags. Typically, requests for tags come from animal producers. As illustrated, an animal producer at premises **3402** requests a tag from a tag manufacturer or distributor **3102**. The tag **3502** is then forwarded to the requesting animal producer at the premises **3402**. The UAID **3112** also is reported to a national animal identification number repository **3302** for the animal producer. Typically, the UAIDs **3112** adhere to the ISO code structure standard for radio frequency identification (RFID). The tag **3502** is attached to an animal and throughout the lifetime of the animal the tag **3502** is used to trace the animal's movements. In an exemplary UAID, according to the USAIP, the ISO code contains 15 numbers, for example, "840 123456789012." This process creates a redundant database and tag tracking system adding cost and complexity to the system.

C.) Group/Lot Identification System

The USAIP also proposes a group/lot identification system, which assigns different values to specific lots or groups. For example, a large feedlot may have dozens of separate feeding areas. Each area or lot may receive its own unique number to further distinguish where an animal has been. Another reason for using a group/lot identification system is that animals often are transferred in groups to a premises or from a premises. Each shipment of animals that comes in or moves out may be considered a group. The GID is typically based on a date. For example, the USAIP requires that a six-digit number be added to the PID to reflect the date a group of animals moved into the premises. This means that an animal shipped to a premises with the PID "A234L69" on Oct. 3, 2003, has the combined group lot number "A234L69100303," where the final six digits represent the date of arrival. The GID provides a way to further distinguish groups of animals of that have not been commingled. If a GID is used, the USAIP does not always require that each animal receive a UAID or a GID identifier on each animal. As discussed below, this may prevent reconciliation and confirmation from taking place to improve the accuracy of the data.

D.) USAIP Infrastructure

Based on the above-identified systems, the USAIP proposes an infrastructure that includes a national premises allocator, local government premises systems, a national premises repository, individual animal identification number databases, an animal identification number allocator, a national animal identifier repository and "reader" technology in order to trace animal location histories. The reader technology can include electronic RFID tags and RFID readers placed at various collection points. For example, the reader technology would be most likely implemented at markets, expositions, slaughter facilities, feedlots, etc. By recording

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the PID and UAID of animals, an accurate history of their movement through the streams of commerce can be recorded and traced.

Notably, within the USAIP, the identification devices used to identify animals may vary across species groups. Under the USAIP, the government assigns UAIDs, so official devices may be required.

II.) USAIP Deficiencies

Major opposition from the livestock industry has delayed implementation of the USAIP. One of the main drawbacks to implementing the USAIP's NAIS relates to the ability to protect the confidentiality of collected data. For example, many animal producers are concerned that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) would require the government to release all collected data. Releasing such information could cause irrevocable harm to the livestock industry just as it did when the first mad cow case was discovered in the U.S. Moreover, releasing confidential business information could also damage reputations and cause producers to lose money.

Protecting records also is important to prevent unfair speculation and manipulation of pricing at sourcing and markets. For example, if the government obtains and releases industry proprietary information, buyers or sellers of animals can artificially inflate or deflate prices based on the released data. Ultimately, collected data should be safeguarded. Hence, there is a need for a NAIS that ensures the confidentiality of that data.

The NAIS also has few, if any, aspects to verify the accuracy of data. Inaccuracies can be costly. For example, inaccurate tracking may result in treating, such as by quarantine, animals that were healthy and did not require segregation. This would cause a producer to lose money since quarantine interferes with the movement and management of animals in normal commerce. Moreover, because of an inappropriate quarantine, an animal producer and its herds generally may be perceived as being "bad," which hurts the reputation of the producer and the value of its other herds. Furthermore, animal producers and marketers are concerned that they may incur consumer liability (or at least legal costs) due to inaccurate tracking results.

The USAIP's NAIS is difficult and costly to implement. The USAIP creates a separate NAIS dedicated exclusively to tracking animals. This means that animal producers that already use commercial systems to track their animals would have to finance their current tracking systems as well as the NAIS tracking system. Hence, the cost may become prohibitive, especially for small herd owners. Moreover, the USAIP experts failed to recognize the potential to utilize commercial tracking and management information systems that actually would add enough value to the process to cover the cost of complying with the official government requirements. Furthermore, the USAIP failed to recognize the inherent resistance to additional government mandated identification, reporting and costs to the industry when more than 99 percent of animals are healthy, disease free, non-quarantined animals. These additional costs would be incurred in order to identify the less than 1 percent of animals requiring FAD management.

The proposed NAIS regulates animal movement in commerce by requiring movement records. Moreover, the NAIS provides no method for a real time confirmation of the official records because it does not have access to confidential data by design. Real time confidential confirmation could be an important feature for buyers and sellers of animals. Again by way of example, a buyer may like to know, virtually immediately upon request, whether an animal has an appropriate movement record and, further, that such record can be

accessed as desired. If such a record cannot be accessed by a buyer wanting to purchase an animal, then the buyer takes a risk that he will not be able to resell the animal. Thus, such information should be available to the buyer. The proposed NAIS does not allow or permit for real time confidential confirmation and reconciliation of such events, whereas some of the embodiments disclosed herein do allow for real time confidential confirmation and reconciliation.

The USAIP's NAIS also relies solely on RFID identifiers to identify an animal. A producer may lose an assigned RFID, or the RFID may fail to operate correctly. If this occurs, the animal's identification cannot be properly recorded, or if initially recorded correctly, cannot be verified upon a move-in or move-out event. RFIDs also would have to be requested by a producer according to an allocation by a government agency, associated with an individual animal, and then such information reported to the agency. This scenario requires time and compliance with the requirements by each producer as well as an additional inventory to keep. Embodiments of the disclosed method and system allow for these or other animal identifiers to be used and easily and accurately replaced, which simplifies appropriate identification of problematic animals and compliance by participants. Also, these embodiments can eliminate the risk of the tag allocation database confidentiality being compromised.

III.) Alternative to the USAIP

The components and systems of the disclosed animal identification framework (AIF) accomplish what the USAIP proposes, while overcoming one or more of its limitations. Some embodiments of the disclosed AIF incorporate computerized data management system tools and techniques to timely process information regarding the movement of animals from one location to another. These and other embodiments have the potential to help maintain the normal speed of commerce in buy/sell transactions, help provide records that make animals more valuable to buyers and sellers, improve the accuracy of animal movement and animal sales transactions, protect the animal owners from liability due to inaccuracies, protect the confidentiality of producer data, and lower the cost of tracking animals.

In commercial and official data settings, the information collected through the disclosed AIF can be beneficial in a variety of ways. For example, in some embodiments, when an animal change of possession occurs, the new owners or custodians are easily provided with the historical animal records and current records necessary to move the animal. Suppose, for example, a purchaser buys an animal without first obtaining a trace history of the animal. Owning animals purchased without records violates regulatory rules and purchasing animals without historical records incurs a risk of being unable to resell the animals. Some embodiments of the disclosed AIF avoid these problems.

Additionally, the disclosed AIF may protect purchasers against liability in case of a disease outbreak. Moreover, because information is collected in an organized and strong framework, it is possible to share commercial data among the diverse and segmented livestock industries, thereby adding value to the overall system, and helping offset the costs associated with the implementation of the AIF. There are many other private benefits and uses for the AIF, some of which will be described in the remainder of this disclosure.

In a public sense, the disclosed AIF is beneficial because it allows health officials to identify and quarantine animals that have commingled with diseased animals. Thus, it reduces the chance that a consumer will purchase infected meats or other tainted animal products. For example, if a cow is diagnosed with mad cow disease, to protect consumers from purchasing

tainted meat, health officials or industry members, using the embodiments of the disclosed system and methods of the AIF, may trace and ascertain where the cow has been throughout its life. Based on that information, other animals that have commingled with the diseased cow can be examined or quarantined for the same disease.

To trace animals within the AIF, animal information can be recorded as the animals pass through data collection points. At minimum, the recorded information typically includes location history information (e.g., a PID) and an animal identifier. However, in many situations, animal information includes other information, including commercial and confidential information. For example, it may include the height, weight, size, age, sex, species, color, type of feed, drug treatment history, actual animal location, such as by GPS, name of owner, and other relevant animal information. Conducting a computerized trace of an animal typically involves ascertaining the animal identifier and searching the recorded animal information to find previous locations that the identified animal occupied.

Within the disclosed AIF are various tools and techniques for collecting animal information. The MicroBeef patent documents, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference, describe various tools and techniques for collecting and tracking animal histories. For example, some of the tools and techniques described in the '647 patent, such as the electronic ID tag encoded with an animal identifier, may be used to uniquely and universally identify an animal. Such identifiers and tools in the MicroBeef patent documents may be used to collect and store animal information. For example, as an animal passes through data collection points, such as those described in the MicroBeef patent documents, animal information can be collected. Typically, the data collection points use sensors, scanners, or other reader technology to record animal information as the animal passes through a gate or chute. Additional information may be collected when an animal is examined, weighed, measured, or otherwise analyzed. With the collected information, authorized health officials and others may trace an animal's location history.

In some implementations, the AIF includes an integrated database system that shares official data among industry members and authorized health officials. The database system may be located, for example, at a single location, at multiple locations with identical, redundant information, or at multiple, networked locations sharing different information. The database system also may be in different countries to integrate information collected within multiple countries. In some embodiments, filtering tools and techniques are used to screen non-official data from any shared-access database. The shared information typically includes enough data for the USDA and health officials to accomplish their trace objectives, yet still protects animal producers' interests.

For example, the AIF can include a database specifically containing all reported animal records. This database can be administered and regulated by a data trustee, a data service provider or some other entity. The administrator can screen sensitive information from the government and other third-parties by filtering such information. The data trustee then only forwards to an official database the official data required to identify an animal and perform an animal trace. When a diseased animal is discovered, the USDA may enter an animal ID or premises ID to request a trace history for the animal from the official database. Such a trace history might include an indication that the animal occupied certain locations without providing specific location identifiers. Similarly, a trace report on a premises might include an indication that certain animals occupied the premises without providing specific

animal identifiers. If required for a health-related trace, specific premises and animal identifiers can be provided to the government upon request. By implementing a data trustee function in the AIF and/or initially only allowing government access to a minimum amount of data, animal producers maintain control of most confidential information, and avoid many of the problems associated with inaccurate or leaked information. In some embodiments a data trustee is not utilized and the data trustee function is performed by the official database operator or another party.

The tools and techniques associated with the disclosed AIF use or adopt proven existing technologies wherever possible. For example, some implementations utilize state-of-the-art national and international animal identification standards with the best available practical technologies to create a plan that is dynamic and flexible. The AIF also can incorporate new and proven technologies as they become available. The techniques and tools described herein can be implemented in various ways, and may be used in combination or separately.

IV.) Animal Identification Framework Overview

The disclosed animal identification framework (AIF) can include an extensible framework designed to facilitate the collection and trace of animal data, including animal location histories. Within this framework, both hardware and software components can be included to, for example, identify animals, transmit data about the animals, collect the transmitted data, filter out confidential information from the collected data, and release the confidential data when necessary. FIG. 4 shows an exemplary AIF 4002 in which various techniques described herein may be implemented. Basically, the AIF 4002 has tools that collect and store (or work with hardware and software that collect and store) animal data, including animal identification data and animal location history data. The AIF 4002 filters non-official data and releases the official data upon proper request.

AIF 4002 is a cross-system framework that can be used with multiple database systems, hardware devices, and applications in many configurations. It provides a strong foundation upon which animal trace tools and techniques can be implemented. The AIF 4002 may use tools and techniques described in the MicroBeef patent documents, but this is not a requirement.

FIG. 4 shows various components of the AIF 4002. Among the illustrated components are a data service provider 4202 for receiving and storing mixed data 4112 from an animal producer 4102, a data trustee 4302 for screening non-official parts of the mixed data 4212 from the data service provider 4202, and an official database 4402 for storing official data 4312 forwarded by the data trustee 4302. Within the overall AIF 4002, there may be one or multiple data service providers 4202, data trustees 4302 and official databases 4402. The overall AIF 4002 is capable of collecting data from animal producers 4102, data service providers 4202, data trustees 4302 and others, and providing a trace report 4412 to the government 4502 and for authorized commercial uses.

The data service provider 4202 primarily is responsible for collecting the mixed data 4112. The data trustee 4302 primarily is responsible for screening the mixed data 4112 into official data and non-official data. The animal producer 4102, data service provider 4202 and data trustee may be the same entity or separate entities. For example, an animal producer 4102 may act as a data service provider 4202 and/or a data trustee 4302. Alternatively, the animal producer 4102 may be a separate entity, but the data service provider 4202 and the data trustee 4302 are the same entity.

A variety of tools and techniques may be used for collecting and transmitting animal information for use in embodiment

ments of the disclosed AIF. These tools and techniques can be hardware-based, software-based or a combination thereof. For example, an electronic identification device (EID) may be attached to an animal. As the animal passes through an AIF data collection point, pre-encoded animal information may be collected from the EID. The data service provider 4202 may be used to receive and store this data.

Data service providers 4202 can include commercial data system organizations that have the necessary personnel, computer management expertise, and data gathering capabilities to detect, receive, store, and report animal information. Alternatively, or in conjunction with a commercial data system, a data service provider 4202 can include, without limitation, animal producers, marketers, and purchasers that own and operate the necessary reader and data storage technology to receive, store, and report animal information. Within the context of the disclosed AIF 4002, there may be a multitude, e.g., hundreds of data service providers 4202 to collect animal information. These data service providers may be ratified by industry members.

The mixed data 4112 received by the data service providers 4202 typically includes a mix of official and non-official data. Official data includes, for example, the data necessary for the government 4502 to trace an animal. Non-official data generally is all data other than official data. Non-official data can include, for example, commercial data, such as animal age, weight, sex, etc. Both official data and non-official data may be confidential. In some embodiments, the data service provider 4202 forwards only official data to the data trustee 4302.

Alternatively, the data service provider 4202 may forward both official and non-official data to data trustee 4302. If there is no data trustee 4302, the data service provider 4202 may screen the mixed data 4112 and forward official data to the official database 4402 or directly to the government 4502.

Within the AIF 4002, the data trustee 4302, if present, can act as a buffer between commercial animal identification systems and any government system. The functions of a data trustee 4302 can be to receive forwarded data 4212 from data service providers 4202 or animal producers 4102, to screen and filter the forwarded data 4212, to maintain the official database 4402, which may be a multiple-database system, and to generate reports.

As a component within the AIF 4002, a data trustee 4302 can include those individuals, groups, organizations, and tools designated by industry members, perhaps approved by the government, to screen the forwarded data 4212 before it is sent to the official database 4402, which is accessible by the government 4502. The actual number of data trustees 4302 may vary based on cost to implement, size and growth of animal industries, improving network and database technologies, and other such factors. As mentioned above, in some embodiments, the data service provider 4202 may act as its own data trustee 4202.

As shown in FIG. 4, after receiving data 4212, the data trustee 4302 may screen and filter the data to remove non-official data. The data trustee 4302 then forwards official data 4312 to the official database 4402. Typically, the official data 4312 includes the necessary information for the government 4502 to start tracing an animal's location history. For example, the data trustee 4302 may filter all the data it receives except for an animal identifier and a data record address to a record in the official database 4402. Thus, knowing the animal identifier may be sufficient to retrieve the other animal information from the official database 4402. In other implementations, the data trustee 4302 may filter more or less data. For example, if the government 4502 requests a trace report 4412 based on a premises rather than a specific animal,

the data trustee 4302 may forward a premises identifier and a data record address from the official database 4402 for each animal associated with the premises identifier. The amount and type of data forwarded to the official database 4402 may change as government and industry needs change.

The official database 4402 can serve as a repository of official data 4412 from the data trustee 4402. In the disclosed AIF, a data trustee 4302 can be the administrator and arbiter of all the official data 4312 that is stored in the official database 4402. In some implementations, the official database 4402 is the only database to which the government 4502 has access. In other implementations, the data trustee 4302 is the only entity to have access to the official database 4402. More than one official database 4402 may be maintained in order to provide more rapid access to official data 4312 and to provide redundancy and fail-safes in case a connection or system goes down. Data in multiple databases can be synchronized periodically to ensure consistency throughout the databases.

In some implementations, the data trustee 4302 maintains the official database 4402 and the government 4502 maintain a separate database. In addition, a separate database may be maintained under the control of the data trustee 4302 and used to contain non-official data. This allows industry members to keep some data confidential until requested by the government 4502. For example, if a rancher wants to keep his ranch premises identifier confidential, some embodiments of the disclosed AIF 4002 would make it possible to do so. The government 4502 does not actually need access to the premises identifier until an animal health or safety issue arises. Thus, the data trustee 4302 can filter the premises identifier from being forwarded to a database accessible to the government 4502, e.g., the official database 4402. When the need arises, the government 4502 may submit a request to the data trustee 4302 for premises identifiers. After a proper request, the data trustee 4302 may send the requested information to the government 4502. The number of filtered fields in the official database 4402 may vary depending on implementation, government regulations, logistical concerns, ease of implementation, and other such factors.

Using data requested from the official database 4402, the government 4502 typically has access to sufficient data to trace an animal within the currently mandated 48-hour time period. In other implementations, tracing an animal may take more or less time to complete, and much faster trace results likely can be achieved with the present method and system, such as within minutes.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 4, the AIF 4002 provides a variety of trace reports 4122, 4222, 4322, 4422 to confirm events as they occur. Trace reports can take several forms. For example, some trace reports include all location data for an animal. Confirmation reports, which are a type of trace report, typically include enough data to confirm some event, such as a move-in or move-out event, and may protect the confidentiality of premises identifiers while providing a function important to animal commerce. Another type of trace report, the reconciliation report, can be generated to reconcile a discrepancy in reported data. Reconciliation reports typically are generated upon request when the data, such as the data in a confirmation report indicates a discrepancy. For example, when an animal is shipped to a feedlot, a confirmation report 4122 can be sent to the animal producer 4102 confirming animal arrival. Similarly, when data 4212 is forwarded to the data trustee 4302, a confirmation report 4222 can be sent confirming receipt of the data. After the data 4212 has been filtered and official data 4312 forwarded to the official database 4402, another confirmation report 4322 can be generated and sent to the data service provider 4202 and/or

the data trustee 4302 confirming receipt of the information. If a discrepancy is found, such as between the official data 4312 and data stored in national identifier repositories, a reconciliation report can be generated. The format and delivery methods of these reports may vary. For example, some reports can be sent via text email. Other reports can be accessed over a webpage. In addition, some reports can be sent as text files, PDFs, or other standardized format. Alternatively, the reports can be sent as text messages, paper copies, or some other readable format.

In some other implementations, animal producers 4102 are allowed to request a reconciliation report from the data trustee 4302 in order to view their current inventory as recorded in the official database 4402. This function allows producers 4102, data service providers 4202, and data trustees 4302 to correct any potential database errors by reconciling information. For example, upon request, a rancher may file a move-out report with a data service provider 4202 and receive a move-in report from the data service provider 4202. The rancher may check the reports against each other. If there are any errors, the rancher may submit a request to correct the information. By generating confirmation reports as data passes from one component of the AIF 4002 to another, errors and inconsistencies in the data can be identified throughout the process, avoiding major discrepancies or errors in the future. Confirmation reports also provide an automated chain of custody to ensure the database information is synchronized with actual animal movements. Without a chain of custody and reconciliation process the system may become less reliable and animal producers 4102 may experience greater liability.

In some embodiments of the AIF, non-government entities that request trace reports are screened to ensure that they are authorized to receive the data. For example, an animal producer 4102 may request a reconciliation report for his own animals, but may not request a reconciliation report for the animals of another producer. The AIF can include password-protected access and other security features to verify the identity of requesters.

In some embodiments, the data trustee 4302 and the official database 4402 allow animal producers 4102 or other users to perform the essential functions of reading, updating, and deleting records. To do so, an interface, such as a web-based interface, a database interface, or customized software application, can be provided so animal producers 4102 or others may securely connect to the database to read and/or update records. In some implementations, error correction is done directly by the animal producers 4102, e.g. they log onto a secure system and manually correct errors. Preferably, an animal producer 4102 submits a request to correct erroneous data to the data trustee 4302. The data trustee 4302 verifies the submitted data and makes appropriate updates. Other techniques for updating and correcting information also may be available.

As shown in FIG. 4, within the AIF 4002, the government 4502 can trace animal location histories. For example, the government 4502 may request data from the official database 4402 and then may submit an additional request for a complete trace of an animal to the data trustee 4302. Upon receipt of a request, the data trustee 4302 generates a trace report 4412 from the official database 4402. The trace report 4412 can include a list of every premises the animal has occupied during its traceable lifetime. The trace report 4412 also can include other information, such as the date, time, and group number associated with an animal when it lived at a premises.

Using the information from the trace report 4412, the government 4502 may contact the listed premises for more infor-

mation or request further information from the data trustee **4302**. In some implementations, the initial trace report **4412** includes identifiers for all animals that have ever commingled with the traced animal.

Notably, when the government **4502** makes a direct request to the data trustee **4302** for information, all official data is granted within the guidelines set forth by government and industry regulatory bodies. Other information is released at the discretion of the data trustee **4302**.

The disclosed AIF **4002** includes elements of software and/or hardware. The relationship shown between the components in FIG. 4 is one example of the main flow of information; other relationships are not shown for the sake of simplicity. Depending on the implementation, components can be added, omitted, split into multiple components, combined with other components, and/or replaced with like components or systems. Alternatively, a framework with different components and/or other configurations can be used to perform one or more of the AIF processes described herein.

Various implementations of the components in the disclosed AIF are described in greater detail in the following subsections.

A.) Data Service Provider

Data service providers typically provide the necessary data collection tools, reporting systems and services, customer support and education to enable the transfer of data from animal producers to data trustees. FIG. 5 illustrates a simple block diagram of a data service provider **5002**. The data service provider **5002** collects and stores animal information in a single or multiple data service provider databases **5502**, generates reports **5552** confirming receipt of the information, and then forwards official data **5602** to a data trustee. As illustrated in FIG. 5, the data service provider **5002** includes elements of software and/or hardware. The relationships shown between the components in FIG. 5 indicate the main flow of information; other relationships are not shown for the sake of simplicity. Depending on implementation, components can be added, omitted, split into multiple components, combined with other components, and/or replaced with like components or systems. Alternatively, a data service provider with different components and/or other configurations perform one or more of the techniques described herein.

1.) Animal Information Sources

The data service provider **5002** can receive data from multiple sources. The data service provider **5002** also may receive a variety of different types of data. As shown in FIG. 5, these types of data may include animal identification data **5102**, commercial data **5202** and premises identification data **5302**.

a.) Animal Identification Data

The animal identification data **5152** is data that is unique to an individual animal. All of the data collected for an animal, including premises identifiers and commercial data can be linked to the animal's identification data **5152**. Thus, the animal identification data **5152** can serve as the data that distinguishes one animal's record from another animal's record.

As discussed above in connection with FIG. 3, the animal identification data **5152** can include an assigned UAIID. Under the USAIP, the only form of identification for an animal is its UAIID. This approach, however, can be problematic if, for example, an animal loses its tag. Under the USAIP, a new tag would have to be assigned along with a new UAIID. Assignment of a new UAIID for the same animal is likely to cause errors in the database and may compromise the confidentiality of animal data. In some embodiments of the disclosed AIF, the animal identification data **5152** includes more than one identifier. For example, the animal identification

data **5152** can include a database identifier to which the other animal identification data **5152** is correlated. Thus, if an animal's tag is lost, the animal can be assigned a new tag associated with a new number correlated in the database to the same database identifier. This prevents errors in the data. Additional animal identification data **5152** can include, for example, data from RFID devices, retinal scan data, DNA profiles, data from visual devices, data from bar code devices, data from brands, and combinations thereof.

In some embodiments, the database identifier is the UAIID. For example, an animal may receive a tag with a UAIID assigned by a government animal identification allocator. When the tag is associated with an animal, the UAIID is entered into the database and becomes the permanent database identifier for the animal. If the animal subsequently loses its tag, a new tag can be associated with the animal and the number on the new tag can be linked to the animal's database identifier (which is the UAIID from the first tag assigned to the animal). Thus, unlike under the USAIP, the UAIID can remain a permanent identifier for a particular animal even if the animal loses its tag.

UAIDs are proposed under the USAIP as official 15-digit-ISO identification numbers allocated by the USDA. As discussed above, these numbers may be encoded on an RF tag or other device. However, in some cases, at the producer's option, the official numbers are not required to be associated with the animals and alternate physical identifiers are used. For example, in a small herd of 20 animals, the animal producer may keep a list of his animals' UAIDs. When an animal identified by an identification device is moved or sold, animal information, including tracking information, may be scanned from the producer's records (e.g., scanning bar codes from paper), entered manually, or input in some other way.

The database identifier also can be a value other than the UAIID. If the official database is accessible to the government, having a database identifier other than the UAIID, which typically is assigned by the government, helps to protect the confidentiality of the data. For example, the accessible data may show that certain animal identifiers are associated with a premises identifier without actually identifying the animals.

Some assigned animal identifiers, such as UAIDs, can be placed in an animal identifier repository. This repository may serve to ensure the uniqueness and universality of the animal identifiers and to ensure that animal data is available for access when needed. In some implementations, an animal identifier allocator assigns animal identifiers to tag manufacturers. Under the NAIS proposed in the USAIP, as new animals are born, a rancher may request tags for each newborn animal. Each tag has an encoded animal identifier that originated with the animal identifier allocator. Under the USAIP, the animal identifiers are UAIDs that also serve as database identifiers. In some embodiments of the disclosed AIF, multiple identifiers can be used. For example, the multiple animal identifiers may be associated with a single database identifier so that if a tag is lost, the number identifying the animal in the database does not need to be changed. In some embodiments, identifiers are encoded onto tags by tag manufacturers without giving the government access to the identifiers. This further protects the confidentiality of the data.

Some forms of animal identification data **5152** provided to the data service provider **5002** via a physical device, such as a tag. The device can include elements of software and/or hardware. Various implementations of identification devices are discussed in the MicroBeef patent documents, which are incorporated by reference. For example, in the '647 patent, an identification tag that uses radio frequency technology (RFID) to transmit signals to an RF reader is disclosed. The

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RF reader collects and stores the data sent by the tag. In other implementations, the identification device may use other wireless and/or microwave technologies, such as Wi-Fi, WiMax, etc., to transmit animal information to the data service provider 5002. Moreover, in yet other implementations, the identification device is a transponder, a chipcard, a biometric device, a magnetic device, a scan code, a bar code, a visual cue such as a cattle brand, or any other state-of-the-art and/or cost effective technology. Alternatively, the device is implemented as a combination of these technologies.

Under the USAIP, a specific type and design of radio frequency identification (RFID) tags are used as the official identification device to identify animals. However, any RFID tags following ISO standards can create numbers that universally identify animals without needing any additional setup. The USAIP numbering system provides producers the flexibility to utilize readily available ISO compliant identification devices from a source of their choice. For example, there are nonofficial RFID ISO compliant tags that may be used one time or multiple times to reduce the cost. Recycling the RFID tags is particularly useful if the tags include GPS functionality, which makes them more expensive to replace. Moreover, by using non-official, ISO compliant tags the industry is not burdened with sourcing restrictions and managing official tags inventory for the USDA. Furthermore, different species of animals may use different types of tags.

In some implementations, the identification devices are programmable, e.g., animal producers or others can encode information onto the devices. At the very least, the devices include an animal identifier to uniquely identify an animal. However, other information, including but not limited to, age, sex, weight, breed and/or species, owner, drug history, feed history, and combinations thereof also may be encoded into the device.

Animals other than food animals also can be tracked by the system, as they also may come into sufficiently close contact with a food animal to transmit disease. For example, pets and wild animals that are tracked by pet owners or wildlife officials also can be tracked using disclosed embodiments of the method and system.

As an animal identification system, either a nationwide (NAIS) or worldwide system, is implemented, there may be difficulties in assimilating and converting current tracking systems. To reduce costs, to allow producers and data service providers to maintain their current systems while the transition occurs, and to allow time to install approved tags on animals, animal information may be linked to other values until a permanent system is in place. For example, the name of a company and its proprietary animal identifier may uniquely identify an animal. Thus, during the transition phase, an additional field in the various databases lists that temporary identifier value, until a new conforming identifier is in place. Animal information is updated and linked to the new animal identifier as it becomes available.

In some implementations, the animal identifier is associated with meat shipments during processing and even after the animal has been slaughtered. For example, packaging containing processed food products can be tracked, and the food products correlated with the animal history from which such products were produced.

b.) Commercial Data Sources

Referring again to FIG. 5, the data service provider 5002 also may receive and store commercial data 5202 from commercial data sources. Commercial data 5202 can include commercially valuable data, e.g., the type of data used by animal producers in the course of business. Commercially valuable information can include, but may not be limited to,

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an animal's owner, breed, size, weight, age, sex, feed type, vaccination or other treatment reports, pricing terms, veterinarian reports, and any other data that is commercially useful. The amount and type of commercial data 5202 collected by the commercial data sources may vary based on individual producer needs. Commercial data 5202 sent by commercial data sources can be collected by the data reader 5402. In some embodiments, all inputs into animals is tracked. For example, the identifications and locations of feed can be tracked and associated with the animals that consume the feed. Computerized systems for manufacturing and/or administering feed may facilitate this form of tracking.

The age of an animal can be determined, for example, by dentition. An animal's age can be evaluated based on its teeth by any known method, such as visual inspection, video imaging of the mouth with manual or automated analysis of the images and any combination thereof. Age also can be determined by ultrasound examination of animal bones or by DNA profile.

In some implementations, commercial data sources 5402 are the tools and techniques described in the MicroBeef patent documents, which are incorporated herein by reference. For example, one aspect of the '647 patent tracks the historical and projected weights of animals using external measurement tools at feedyards. That information may be valuable for commercial purposes. Using such tools and techniques described in the '647 patent, information can be collected and transferred to the data service provider 5002. The actual transfer can involve transmitting information from the animal producer's computer systems to the data service provider 5002. The data reader 5402 receives the commercial data about an animal and adds it to the animal's complete data record 5452.

c.) Premises Identification Data

A premises identifier 5302 identifies a premises, which is an identifiable physical location where an animal might be located. In FIG. 4, premises typically include animal producers 4102, processors and markets. Referring again to FIG. 5, the premises identifier 5302 can be submitted by the participant and automatically added to animal data records by the data trustee whenever an animal is moved from one premises to another. The data trustee may first validate the premises identifier for the location. For example, if a cattle rancher auctions an animal locally, when the animal moves from the ranch to the auction house the animal's data records can be updated to reflect this move by, for example, submitting a move report to a data service provider 5002. When the animal arrives at the auction house, a new data entry, including the auction house's premises identifier, is added to the animal's records showing the animal's arrival. This new data entry is submitted to the data service provider 5002. An animal's location history can be tracked using the animal identifier 5152 to obtain the premises identifiers 5302 for locations occupied by the animal. In some implementations, the premises identifier 5302 is the PID described above in connection with the USAIP. Alternatively, the premises identifier 5302 is a different value.

In some disclosed embodiments, animal movements are tracked during transport from one premises to another. For example, animals commingled on a single transport, such as a truck or train, might be identified. GPS may be used for tracking vehicles transporting animals as an additional method for tracking movement and location of the animals. The use of GPS for tracking vehicles transporting animals can be accomplished with systems similar or identical to existing systems for tracking trucks, ambulances and other vehicles. Typically, a GPS receiver and associated data storage device

are used to record the vehicle's coordinate location. The location data can be stored for future transmission or may be transmitted to a data storage location in real time using RF communications or other methods. GPS mapping products, which are readily available commercially, can be used to transform GPS coordinate location data into illustrative mapping. The loading and unloading locations of transport vehicles are readily determined by recording GPS coordinate data as well. Furthermore, the identification of animals by RFID or other methods at loading and unloading locations or on the vehicles can be accomplished with conventional RFID readers or other devices. Such data can be recorded for integration with the GPS coordinate data in a computer system.

As suggested by the USAIP, in some implementations a national or worldwide premises allocator assigns PIDs upon request. Referring back to FIG. 2, however, there are other implementations for allocating premises identifiers not described by the USAIP. For example, an animal producer may fill out an electronic request form and submit it to the premises allocator 2302 via the Internet. In response, the premises allocator 2302 would assign and send a PID 2112 to the requesting animal producer. Notably, in this implementation, the premises allocator 2302 assigns the PID 2112 without prior screening by state officials. In other implementations, the premises allocator 2302 files a request with the state for verification information before assigning the PID 2112. Alternatively, the premises allocator 2302 verifies some minimal pieces of data, such as name, address, and phone number, before allocating the PID.

Another implementation for assigning premises identifiers involves the data trustee. The data trustee can be given a range of premises identifiers that are allocated when an animal producer or premises reports animal information for the first time. For example, when a non-registered premises sends animal information to a data service provider, since there is no valid premises identifier, the information can be immediately forwarded to a data trustee. The data trustee then obtains and allocates a premises identifier for the non-registered premises and notifies the premises of the new value. Moreover, a copy of the premises identifier with accompanying premises identification information can be deposited in a national premises identification repository. As before, the data trustee may ask for verification information from the requesting premises before allocating a premises identifier.

In some cases, the premises allocator or data trustee assigns a temporary identifier to a premises until the premises can be certified by either the allocator, government agency, or the data trustee. Under these circumstances, the temporary identifier may be only allocated for a short period of time, after which the premises needs to be authenticated by an appropriate entity.

If a temporary identifier is used, after a premises is authenticated the temporary identifier can be made permanent. Alternatively, a new permanent identifier can be assigned and all records with the temporary identifier can be updated with or linked to the new identifier. Again in the alternative, records received from a premises with a temporary identifier can be maintained in a separate database until the premises has been authenticated. At that point, all of its records can be moved to a valid premises database. Temporary identifiers may be distinguished from permanent ones based on their format, based in a table listing temporary identifiers, or in some other way.

The actual format of the premises identifier may vary. According to the USAIP, a PID is a 7 character alphanumeric value. In other implementations, the premises identifier may have more or fewer characters. Moreover, a premises identi-

fier may be randomly generated according to a defined format, it may be assigned from a master list or database of values, it may be derived from animal producer information (e.g., a hash of the premises' name or other proprietary information), it may incorporate letters or numbers from a premises company name or brand, or it may be derived in some other way.

In some implementations, a value such as a NULL, zero, or other random non-conforming value may be inserted into a data record until a proper premises identifier is received.

Animal producers and premises can be notified of their new premises identifier via a receipt web page, an email, mail, telephone call, or some other mechanism. In every case, the newly-generated PID is sent to a national or worldwide premises repository, such as the repository 2302 described in connection with FIG. 2.

Referring again to FIG. 5, once a premises identifier 5302 has been assigned and sent to the proper premises, the premises should include the premises identifier 5302 anytime it sends data to a data service provider 5002 or to a data trustee.

It is worth noting that, although the premises allocator is described herein as a single entity, implementations may include more than one allocator, each designated by government and industry members.

In some embodiments, an animal's identification device or a separate device associated with an animal can be used to provide specific location information. Specific location information is more descriptive of an animal's location than general location information, such as premises identifiers 5302.

For example, a specific location device can include circuitry to receive an RF signal from three or more reference points (e.g., three or more GPS satellites). The received signals then can be used to calculate a location using conventional triangulation or trilateration techniques. The locations occupied by an animal at various times (e.g., at certain time intervals) can be stored in the device and uploaded or otherwise entered into a computer system when the device is read. Alternatively, the location information can be transmitted to a database separate from the device, from which it can be sent to a data service provider 5002. As another option, the location information can be read by an operator who travels to an animal location. The location information gathered by the operator can be, for example, entered into a handheld computer and then uploaded into the data service provider database 5502.

Devices for receiving reference signals and calculating specific locations can be powered, for example, by batteries and/or solar power. Examples of commercially available GPS devices that may be adapted for use on animals include vehicle tracking devices, such as S-911 available from Laipac Tech Inc. (Ontario, Canada) and pet tracking devices, such as the GLOBAL PET FINDER available from GPS Tracks LLC (Jericho, N.Y.).

Generating data on the specific locations of animals at specific times without the need to move the animals to a scanning location has many advantages. For example, this process makes it possible to track animals being transported between premises with assigned PIDs. The process also allows the locations of animals at pasture to be tracked. The specificity provides for the highly accurate identification of animals that have and have not been in close contact with a diseased animal. When a diseased animal is discovered, the exact locations occupied by the animal can be determined and compared to the locations occupied by other animals, such as other animals at the same premises. If there is no overlap in the location data, it can be assumed that the other animals were never in intimate contact with the diseased animal and thus are not likely to have acquired the disease. Thus, the

process reduces the wasteful treatment, quarantine and slaughter of animals that are commingled with a diseased animal, but never have sufficient contact with the diseased animal to acquire the disease.

d.) Group/Lot Identifiers

Related to premises identifiers are group identifiers (GIDs), which distinguish groups of animals from each others as they move through a premises as noted in connection with the USAIP. According to the USAIP, a GID is a six-digit identifier representing a premises arrival date and in some cases is combined with the premises identifier. Thus, unlike the premises identifiers, GIDs are generated by the participant or data service provider, and they may not necessarily be unique. For example, all the cattle that arrive at a feedlot on a specific date may be assigned the same GID. Alternatively, a GID may represent other information, for example, the building where an animal was housed. The GID may be combined with the PID to form a new identifier, or alternatively it may be a separate value in the mixed data database. An alternate embodiment may include using the GID on each animal in a group or lot.

2.) Data Reader

FIG. 5 shows a data reader 5402, which collects animal information for the data service provider 5002. The data reader 5402 can include elements of software and/or hardware. Various implementations of data readers 5402 are discussed in the MicroBeef patent documents, which are incorporated by reference. For example, the '647 patent describes computer systems that record, measure, sort, and track individual animals. The data reader 5402 described herein may perform the same and/or additional functions.

In some implementations, the data reader 5402 collects wireless and microwave technology transmissions (e.g., RFID transmissions) from devices directly attached to animals. Moreover, the data reader 5402 may collect signals and data from transponder devices, chipcards, biometric devices, magnetic devices, GPS devices, and other devices attached to or implanted into an animal. Alternatively, the data reader 5402 receives data transmissions from computing devices, such as computers, PDAs, scanners, cell phones, flash memory cards, and other similar electronic devices containing data, such as commercial data. In yet other implementations, the data reader 5402 uses video imaging and/or ultrasound technology to gather data. In other implementations, light or laser technology is used to scan bar codes or other visual cues (e.g., a cattle brand or mark). In some embodiments, animal information is read manually (e.g., visually) and input manually (e.g., through data entry or voice recognition means). Alternatively, other state-of-the-art and/or cost effective data reader technology is used. The data reader 5402 also can be an optical character reader. Such a reader also may serve as a barcode reader or reader of some other form of visual device.

Data readers 5402 can be installed at designated reader locations. For example, since participants include producers, grazers, auctioneers, feedlots, packers, and other animal marketers, data readers 5402 can be installed at their premises by themselves or with a data service provider 5002. When an animal is sent to a participant that includes a data service provider 5002, the animal typically passes through an entrance gate or chute. An exemplary data reader 5402 is installed at the entrance of the gate or chute. Alternatively, the data reader 5402 is installed in animal barns, pens, stalls, or other similar locations.

As an animal passes through the data reader 5402, the data reader collects animal information. At minimum, this includes an animal identifier 5152. Other commercial and

official data also may be collected at this time. The other data also can be transmitted separately, e.g., via a computer disk, a paper copy, an email, a computer file, etc., and later correlated to the animal identifier 5152 in the data service provider database 5502.

Data collection systems are not limited to any location and can use multiple systems and multiple databases to collect, store, report out and report back data to submitters.

3.) Data Service Provider Database

After the data reader 5402 collects information from the animal information sources, the data can be added to the data service provider database 5502 as a mixed data record 5452. A mixed data record 5452 combines non-official data with official data, typically in a single entry, in the data service provider database 5502. Other animal information, such as premises identifiers 5302, may be added automatically by the data service provider 5002. In some implementations, the data service provider database 5502 is indexed by the animal identifier 5152.

The data service provider database 5502 can be built from commercially available database services. For example, the data service provider database 5502 can be an SQL database with various fields, such as breed, weight, date and time of arrival, animal identifier, premises identifier, etc., defined for the types of information received from the data reader 5402. Alternatively, a different database builder is used, e.g., an XML database, an Access database, a web-enabled database, or any other well-known database management system (DBMS). In other implementations, a custom database is developed.

For ease of administration, the data service provider database 5502 may be spread over multiple computer systems. For example, a feed lot may serve as a data service provider 5002 that receives data for thousands of animals every day. Due to the volume of the information being collected, multiple portions of the data service provider database 5502 may be distributed across many different computer systems and perhaps even multiple computer networks in order to handle the information. To maintain consistency throughout the separate portions of the data service provider database 5502 and to keep the information current, the database portions can be synchronized periodically.

Defined fields can be filled as animal information is collected into the mixed data record 5452. Typically, not every field needs to be filled to be complete the mixed data record 5452. A complete animal record may include a subset of the information in the data service provider database 5502, such as the animal identifier 5152, premises identifier 5302, event type and date and time of arrival.

At least some of the data stored in the data service provider database 5502 can be forwarded to the data trustee. Alternatively, the data service provider may act as its own data trustee. In such embodiments, the data service provider may screen the mixed data into official data and non-official data and forward the official data to the official database or the government.

4.) Reports

The data service provider 5002 can provide various reports, such as the reports 5552 sent to producers and data trustees confirming that the data has been received, recorded, meets NAIS standards, etc. These reports 5552 can provide information regarding the status of an animal event and also can provide a chain of custody that shows where an animal has been. Exemplary animal events include having an identification device applied, moving from one location to another, branding, sightings, shipment to a slaughterhouse, processing into food products, shipping as food products, etc.

When a move-out transaction from one premises to another has been initiated, then a corresponding move-in (receipt) transaction typically needs to issue to acknowledge that the animals, or food products made therefrom, arrived at a valid premises within a specified time period. For example, if a rancher sends an animal to a commercial feedlot (in this case serving as a data service provider **5002**) before sending it to be slaughtered, moving the animal from one location to another can be recorded by data readers **5402**. A data reader **5402** at the ranch can be used to record when the animal leaves and, in addition to other information, a data reader at the feedlot can be used to record when the animal arrives. Upon arrival at the feedlot, a confirmation report can be generated notifying the rancher that the animal arrived. This report typically includes the animal identifier **5152**, premises identifier **5302**, and the event being confirmed. Alternatively, it includes a complete report of all recorded animal information, or any combination of sortable recorded information.

The reports **5552** also can be used to verify that data has been accurately recorded and to reconcile data with other databases. In the example above, a rancher may determine from the confirmation report that an animal's listed information is incorrect. To correct the error, the rancher may contact the data service provider **5002** and provide it with the correct data. In the above example, if the commercial feedlot, as part of a normal verification process, checks with the repository or data service provider **5002** to validate the rancher's premises identifier, it also may detect the error. If the error is detected, a reconciliation report detailing the error can be generated and sent to the commercial feedlot and to the rancher. Again the rancher corrects the error, even if it means requesting a valid premises identifier **5302**.

The number and type of reports **5552** generated by the data service provider **5002** may vary, depending on, for example, government and industry regulations, animal producer and data service provider **5002** wants and needs, and other such factors. Exemplary reports include a move-out report, a ship and trace report, a move-in and reconcile report, and a termination report.

FIGS. 6A-6D show sample reports generated by a data service provider **5002**. For example, FIG. 6A shows a sample move-out confirmation report. The report confirms that **38** animals were shipped from a premises with PID S200971 and all the animals arrived at the destination premises (premises F201565).

FIG. 6B shows a sample move-in report. This report notifies the animal producer that seven of his animals are unaccounted for. The animal producer can then follow-up with the data service provider **5002** to reconcile this discrepancy. For example, the animal producer may wish to order a reconciliation report, which would have data from before the move-in event and from after the move-in event for comparison. Reasons for this type of error include the fact that the animals may never have arrived at the destination premises, the premises identifiers **5302** may be unknown or unregistered, the animal identifiers **5152** may be invalid, or there may have been a hardware or software failure. Whatever the reason, the animal producer should know that he needs to check on his animals.

FIG. 6C illustrates a tag-applied confirmation report. FIG. 6D illustrates a slaughtered or termination report for an animal. Notably, FIGS. 6A-6D illustrate a technique for outputting confirmation reports. In other implementations, the report may be made via email, a web confirmation page, printed report, electronic text, or some other technique.

Throughout its entire process, data service provider **5002** can use secure network, database, and computing technolo-

gies. At least some of the data collected by the data service provider **5002** can be forwarded to a data trustee.

B.) Data Trustee

Data trustees can be used to establish a private sector infrastructure to insure that confidential animal information is not released to the public sector. A number of data trustees, approved by the livestock industry as well as the government, can serve as a buffer between commercial animal information systems and any government sponsored systems. They can be certified with standardized criteria and consent to be audited by industry associations and other oversight groups. Once certified, data trustees can be used to contribute data to the official database and to provide government officials with animal trace reports. Data trustees also provide tools to receive, store and report data to the USDA for various purposes, including disease surveillance and health management purposes. In some embodiments, the functions of the data trustee are performed by the data service provider or the participant.

As illustrated in FIG. 7, the data service provider **7002** includes elements of software and/or hardware. The relationships shown between the components in FIG. 7 indicate the main flow of information; other relationships are not shown for the sake of simplicity. Depending on implementation, components can be added, omitted, split into multiple components, combined with other components, and/or replaced with like components or systems. Alternatively, a data trustee **7202** with different components and/or other configurations can be used to perform one or more of the techniques described herein.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram illustrating one embodiment of a data trustee **7202**. A data trustee **7202** typically receives data from a data service provider **7002**. In some embodiments, this data is stored in a database separate from the official database **7102**. The data trustee typically filters non-official data from the official data and forwards the official data to the official database **7102**. This helps to ensure that the integrity, security, confidentiality, liability, normal commerce, performance and efficiency goals of the NAIS are met. Screened, official data can be forwarded to a government database **7402** upon request. Using data from the government database **7402**, health officials may request a trace report **7302** on a given animal. The data trustee **7202** generates the trace report **7302** upon request. Preferably, the trace report **7302** is generated within a specified, agree-upon time period, such as within 48-hours of request or less.

1.) Official Data

A data service provider **7002** typically sends mixed data to the data trustee **7202**. From this mixed data, a filter **7252** can be used to separate official data from non-official data. Official data typically includes the data necessary to trace an animal. For example, the official data may include an animal identifier, a premises identifier, group/lot identifiers, the date and time an animal was at a premises, etc. In some implementations, the data forwarded by the data service provider **7002** includes only the official data. In such embodiments, the data service provider may be acting as a data trustee and filtering non-official data. The official data can be forwarded to a data trustee or directly to the government. In some other embodiments, the data forwarded by the data service provider includes all of the animal information collected by the data service provider. This approach may help to centralize animal data records and providing wider data access to industry members.

The government may impose requirements on what constitutes official data. For example, currently the government requires access upon request to information describing spe-

specific animal events such as when a tag is allocated, when a tag is applied, when an animal is moved into a premises, moved out of a premises, when a tag is lost, when a tag is replaced, when an animal is imported or exported, sightings of animals, when an animal is slaughtered or dies, when a tag is retired, when an animal is missing, veterinarian inspections, drug information, and other such data. Some of this data is confidential, some of it is not. Any data required by the government can be included in the official data forward to the official database. The confidentiality of this data can be protected until a request is issued by the government. For example, the government may not be informed of the actual Uuids and/or PIDs corresponding to the identifiers in the official database until such information is requested.

Typically, government and health officials are only granted access to the data after making a formal request to the official database **7102**. Alternatively, access is granted only at the discretion of the data trustee **7202** according to specific business and industry guidelines. This protects confidential information from being released to the public at large.

2.) Official Database

After the data trustee **7202** receives data from a data service provider **7002**, the official data can be added to the official database **7102** by the data trustee. Preferably, the official database **7102** operates and is supported 24 hours per day, seven days a week, and 365 days per year.

The official database **7102** can be built from commercially available database services and can include the underlying data, hardware, and software applications required to manage, view, access, add to, delete from, modify, etc., the database. An exemplary official database **7102** is an SQL database with application software built to access the underlying data. Within the official database **7102** are various tables and fields, such as animal identifier, premises identifier, move-in date, move-out date, etc., defined to receive and store information from a data service provider **7002**. Alternatively, a different database builder is used, e.g., an XML database, an Access database, a web-enabled database, or any other well-known database management system (DBMS). In other implementations, a custom database built from the ground up is used.

For ease of administration, the official database **7102** may be spread over multiple computer systems. A data trustee **7202** may receive data for thousands of animals every day. Due to the volume of the information being collected, multiple instances of the official database **7102** may be distributed across many different computer systems, perhaps at different locations, and perhaps even multiple computer networks, in order to handle the load. To maintain consistency throughout the different portions of the official database **7102** and to keep the information current, the database portions typically are synchronized periodically.

In addition, to protect the integrity of the official database **7102**, the data trustee **7002** may use advanced and state-of-the-art security measures to protect the official database's underlying hardware, software, and data. For example, during transmission to or from the data trustee **7202**, the official data may be encrypted using strong encryption algorithms (e.g., those algorithms provided in the Data Encryption Standard (DES), the International Data Encryption Algorithm (IDEA), the RSA algorithm, and Advanced Encryption Standard (AES)). Alternatively, or in conjunction with the strong data encryption algorithms, secure protocols may be used to transmit the official data over a data network. For example, the data may be sent to a secure website, using the secure hypertext transfer protocol (HTTPS). Pretty good privacy (PGP) and secure sockets may also be used to protect the data during

transmission. These and other security measures are designed to prevent non-authorized parties from reading or changing the official data.

Data can be transferred between databases with any off-the-shelf translation and mapping tools to aid in the translation of a submitting database's data element identifier to a standard data element identifier. This technique also may be used to check accuracy.

Furthermore, once the official data is stored in the official database **7102** other security measures may be used to protect the data. In some implementations, the data trustees **7202** are required to implement strict procedures, such as requiring data trustee employees to display security badges, performing background checks on key personnel, securing computers in restricted-access facilities, requiring users to log on using a registered IP address or network-interface card, and implementing strong authentication requirements for accessing data, to control access to the official database **7102**.

Moreover, additional security measures may be applied to the official database **7102**. Exemplary measures include encrypting the data within the official database **7102**, adding security policies to the official database that attach privileges and roles to people with access to confidential information, monitoring and logging a user's activities on the official database to detect misuse or serve as an intrusion detection system, labeling certain types of data as confidential and creating strict rules for accessing the data, and auditing connections.

To provide redundancy and back-up in the event of disaster or failure, backup copies of the official database **7102** may be located in at least two secure and private locations. As a matter of procedure, occasional system checks can be run to verify the consistency of the data in the official database **7102**. Other security measures, such as firewalls and other hardware and software measures also may be used to maintain the integrity of the system.

After the official data is secured, at least a portion of it is screened, filtered, and may be transmitted to the government database **7402**. This filtering function can be performed by the data trustee **7202**, the data service provider **7002** or even the animal producer.

In some embodiments, an animal producer or another authorized entity can review an inventory of animals and the locations of the animals. This review can be done, for example, at any time during animal production and from any location, including remote locations, via, for example, data-access portals. In some embodiments, a user may access the data over the Internet, such as using a customizable, web-enabled portable.

3.) Filters

A filter **7252** can be used to screen data to ensure the non-official data is removed from official data being forwarded to an official database **7102** or to a government database **7402**. In some implementations, the data is filtered automatically. For example, as animal information is received from a data service provider **7002**, specific database rules may be created to automatically forward designated fields of data, e.g., the animal identifier, to the official database **7102** or the government database **7402**. Alternatively, data trustee personnel filter the data manually, e.g. they visually review data records and remove non-official data or they copy the official data into a new data record and forward the new data record to the official database **7102** or the government database **7402**. Preferably, a combination of both automatic and manual filtering is used. For example, a filter **7252** can be programmed into the official database **7102** that automatically removes all data except for the animal identifier. When a new record arrives, the filter **7252** is automatically applied.

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Then the filtered data record is sent to a separate repository until it can be reviewed manually to determine if there is any remaining non-official data. This process provides an additional security measure and allows the data to be checked for accuracy before being forwarded to the government database 7402.

In some cases, there is no government database 7402, only the official database 7102 operated by the data trustee 7202. Under these circumstances, the filter 7252 may be applied after receiving an official request for information from a government official. In other words, a government official typically must request even official information before it is released to the government. In this situation, the filter 7252 is applied just before sending the requested data. Alternatively, the government official may be granted limited access to the official database 7102, e.g., the rights of the government official would be limited to official data.

In some implementations, received data is checked for accuracy before being filtered. For example, the data trustee 7202, before filtering the data, may verify the accuracy of some of the received data by checking a national premises identification repository to see if a received premises identifier is correct. Additionally, the data trustee 7202 may verify the accuracy of any received animal identifiers. If invalid data is received, the data trustee 7202 likely will report the error to a data service provider 7002 or the animal producer, so that appropriate corrections are made. Alternatively, the identifier checks are performed after filtering.

The amount of data being filtered is based on predetermined government and business guidelines. In some implementations, all the animal information is filtered except for the animal identifier. The animal identifier is forwarded to the government database 7402 along with the data record address that corresponds to the animal's information in the official database 7102. Alternatively more or less data may be forwarded to the government database 7402.

This filter 7252 allows the system to effectively address the concerns and the requirements of industry and health officials, protecting producer interests and enabling animal tracing within a short period of time without impeding the normal movement and commerce of animals.

FIG. 8 shows a technique for screening official data in an AIF. This technique can be performed by the data trustee, data service provider animal producer or any combination thereof. If filtering is performed by the animal producer or the data service provider, there may be no need for a separate entity to serve as a data trustee. In some embodiments a component, group, tool, and/or application performs the technique.

Typically, a data trustee tool receives (8102) data records from a data service provider. The received data records include official data that allows government officials to trace animals. For example, the received data records can include an animal identifier, a premises identifier, and other official data. Alternatively, the received data contains both non-official and official data.

Upon receipt of data records from a service provider, the data trustee tool screens (8202) the data for non-official content. If any non-official data is found, the tool filters that data out before forwarding the data record to the official database. In some implementations, any data not specifically required by the USDA is filtered. The filter process is subject to modification based on government and industry regulations.

After filtering non-official data from the received data, the data trustee tool may pass (8302) the screened data to a government database. The government database provides government officials with access to information that allows the government to begin tracing an animal's location history.

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For example, if an animal is diagnosed with mad cow disease, out of concern for public health and safety, a government official may use the animal's identifier to look up trace data in the government database. The trace data stored in the database allows the government to request a trace history report of the diseased animal. Using the reports, other animals that have been commingled and/or intimately associated with the diseased animal may be investigated and treated in an appropriate manner, such as by quarantine.

The various stages of the filtering technique shown in FIG. 8 can be performed separately or in various combinations, such as in conjunction with other stages.

4.) Government Database

Referring back to FIG. 7, the data trustee 7202 can use a filter 7252 to remove non-official data from received data. The official data can be forwarded to an official database 7102 and then, in response to a legitimate request according to the rules, forwarded to a government database 7402.

The government database 7402, like the official database 7102, can be built from commercially available database services. Included within the government database 7402 are the underlying data, hardware, and software application required to manage, view, access, add to, delete from, modify, etc., the database. An exemplary government database 7402 is an SQL database with application software included to access the underlying data. Alternatively, a different database builder is used, e.g., an XML database, an Access database, a web-enabled database, or any other well-known database management system (DBMS). In other implementations, a custom database is developed. The application which accesses the government database is preferably web-based, although alternative interfaces may be used. Within the database are various tables and fields, such as animal identifier, data trustee data record, etc., defined to receive and store information received from the data trustee.

For ease of administration, the government database 7402 may be spread over multiple computer systems. For example, due to the volume of the information being forwarded from a data trustee, portions of the government database 7402 may be distributed across many different computer systems and perhaps even multiple computer networks in order to handle the load. To maintain consistency throughout the portions of the government database 7402 and to keep the information current, the database portions can be synchronized periodically.

The government database 7402 typically stores only premises identification information. When a health related investigation is initiated, the government database 7402 may receive additional information in response to a request using an animal identification related to the investigation. Alternatively a request is made using a premises identification. In some implementations, for every animal record, the government database 7402 stores an animal identifier and a data record address that points to a location in the official database 7102 from which additional animal information can be retrieved. For this reason, the government database 7402 may not implement all of the security measures used to protect the official database 7102, but could if desired. However, to communicate with the official database 7102, the government database 7402 may make use of some of the same security measures. For example, the government database 7402 may employ the tools necessary to decrypt encoded data transfers and data packets from a data trustee 7202. Moreover, in some implementations, other security measures, such as adding security policies to the government database 7402, monitoring and logging user activity on the government database, and

auditing connections, are used to prevent non-authorized parties from reading or changing the data.

To provide redundancy and a fail-safe in the event of a disaster or system failure, the government database **7402** can be backed up on a periodic basis. This may be done by maintaining duplicate instances of the government database **7402** on separate computer systems. If one system fails, the secondary system begins operating. Moreover, storing a duplicate copy of the government database **7402** at an off-site location, backing up the data using a back-up system such as a tape drive, and other similar mechanisms, all insure the consistency of the government database **7402**. Occasional system checks may be run to verify the consistency of the data in the government database **7402**.

As with the official database **7102**, other security measures such as firewalls and other hardware and software measures may be used to maintain the integrity of the system.

5.) Reports

The data trustee **7202** may provide various reports **7302** to producers, data service providers **7002**, government officials and others. Similar to the reports generated by the data service provider **7002**, some of the reports **7302** are confirmation reports to confirm that data has been received, recorded, meets NAIS standards, etc. These reports **7302**, like the reports **5552** described in connection with FIG. 5, provide information regarding the status of an animal and also provide a chain of custody that shows where an animal has been. The data trustee **7202** also provides animal trace reports, which, unlike the confirmation reports created by the data trustee, are generated in response to a request from government officials and show a complete animal history. Finally, the data trustee **7202** may generate reconciliation reports, which typically are generated in response to a request for reconciliation of data after a discrepancy is detected. Reports generated for providing commercial data to managers, buyers, processors, etc. can be used for process verification.

a.) Confirmation Reports

The confirmation reports typically are made in response to animal move events. The confirmation reports may, for example, disclose the factual information regarding the shipping and receiving premises without necessarily disclosing the premises identification numbers of previous premises locations. They allow data service providers **7002** and animal producers to verify that data has been accurately recorded and that data has been properly reconciled within the official database **7102**.

For example, moving an animal from a ranch to a commercial feedlot triggers at least two events: an animal move-out event from the ranch and an animal move-in event at the commercial feedlot. The data service provider **7002** may record these events and forward official data such as the new premises identifier to the data trustee **7202**. Upon receipt of the forwarded information, in some implementations, the data trustee **7202** generates in real-time a confirmation report for the animal producer. In other implementations, the data trustee **7202** reconciles the received data against its own records and those records stored at the national premises identifier repository and the official database **7102**. If no errors are found, a confirmation report is sent to the data service provider **7002** and/or the animal producer. Similarly, when an error is found, the confirmation report notifies the data service provider **7002** and/or the animal producer of the error.

In order to protect industry privacy interests, some premises receive a lifetime premises identifier. In the confirmation reports, this information typically is not disclosed. On the

confirmation reports, the premises identifier may, for example, be reported as "confirmed."

The number and type of reports generated by the data trustee **7202** varies based on government and industry regulation, animal producer and data service provider wants and needs, and other such factors.

Confirmation reports can be useful to animal buyers. In some embodiments, a buyer may require a confirmation report as a condition of the purchase and may refuse payment if no confirmation report is issued. A buyer may, however, first buy animals without a confirmation report and then later receive a confirmation report at the buyer location or another location.

b.) Reconciliation Reports

Reconciliation reports may be generated when a discrepancy arises in the data, such as a discrepancy shown by a confirmation report. Typically, this type of reconciliation report is generated at the request of a participant, such as an animal buyer. Discrepancies may be caused by a variety of factors, such as lost animals, lost identification devices and data-entry errors. In some embodiments, discrepancies are detected automatically and the participant is given the option of ordering a reconciliation report to identify and address the discrepancy.

Reconciliation reports also can be generated to reconcile data in multiple databases. For example, a data trustee may send a reconciliation report to a data service provider to ensure that the data is consistent. If differences are found between the data in two or more databases, the source of the data can be investigated to determine which database is in error.

c.) Trace Reports

Trace reports typically include a location history for a given animal. For example, whenever an animal is moved, the animal identifier, the new premises identifier, date, time, etc. are all recorded in the official database **7102**. In response to a request from a government official, the official database **7102** provides data to the government to generate a report tracing an animal's location history. Alternatively, a trace report may be generated for use by a data service provider, a data trustee or an official database operator according to certain criteria consistent with confidentiality.

In addition to location histories, a trace report may include future animal locations. For example, if an animal lives sequentially at premises A, B, and C during its lifetime and it is discovered that the animal was exposed to a diseased animal while at premises A, a trace report might specify premises occupied by the animal after location A (i.e., locations B and C). Depending on the required information, a trace report may include all the premises occupied by an animal before an event, after an event or both. The premises information also can be limited to a specific time period, such as a time period in which a cohort was known to have an active, contagious disease.

In some implementations, generating the trace report involves searching in the official database **7102** for every location an animal has been and reporting the information on that animal alone. Alternatively, when government officials request data for an animal trace, the official database **7102** may provide the data to generate a comprehensive list of animals that have at one time or another commingled, or have been more intimately in contact, with the traced animal. This search involves determining every premises where an animal has stayed. Then the search continues by identifying every animal that has stayed at the same premises. Such a search likely would be computing resource intensive (and may end up listing every cow in the country). Thus, to narrow the

search, the data trustee 7202 may add additional search terms to its queries, such as the date an animal was at a premises, a GID, or other piece of data. By focusing the search, the data trustee 7202 can provide a reasonably accurate report of all animals that have commingled with the traced animal. Generally, this is done to identify diseased animals. This type of investigation generally returns only a small percentage of the national herd. Thus, only a small percentage of animals need to be treated as deemed appropriate.

If a requesting party has proper authorization a trace report also can be generated for commercial purposes. For example, a trace report may include all locations occupied by an animal and all commercial data for the animal.

FIG. 9 shows an example of a trace report for a single animal. As listed, an animal with an animal identifier of 840 123456789012 lives at three different premises during its lifetime. The animal is tagged at premises AB12345. On Mar. 15, 2005, the animal is sighted on the same premises. Later, the animal is moved to a second premises GH190JK, where the animal stays for about 5 months. On Dec. 20, 2005, the animal is moved to a slaughter house where it waits to be slaughtered.

Trace reports can be structured to protect the privacy and security concerns of animal producers. For example, a trace report based on an animal identifier might include the animal identifier and an indication that the animal inhabited a certain number of premises during its lifetime. The exact premise identifiers can be withheld until requested. Similarly, if a trace report is generated for a given location, the report may include that location's identifier and an indication that certain animals occupied the location at certain times. The exact animal identifiers can be withheld until requested.

After a trace report is generated, if necessary, government and health officials develop an intervention strategy 7502 to keep diseased animals out of the stream of commerce. For example, animals may be treated in any manner appropriate to the situation, such as quarantine, medical treatment, or slaughter. Alternatively, the animals are dealt with in any other suitable manner.

d.) Tracing Technique

FIG. 10 illustrates an example of a technique for tracing an animal. Tracing generally includes identifying an animal 10302 (usually a diseased one), requesting a trace report 10402 for the animal, identifying other potentially infected animals 10502, and finally implementing a strategy 10702 to protect people from being infected by tainted meat and to reduce the other effects the diseased animal may have on commerce. Tools, components, and systems such as those illustrated in FIG. 4 can be used to perform the technique. Alternatively, another tool and/or system can be used to perform the technique.

In a first stage, an animal is diagnosed (10102) with an infectious disease such as mad cow disease. To prevent spread of the disease, health officials attempt to determine what animals have commingled with the diseased animal. This can be done in one of at least two ways. First the health officials using the diseased animal's identifier look up (10302) the data record for the diseased animal in the official database and submit (10402) a formal request for a trace report on the diseased animal. The formal request may be submitted electronically, e.g. through a web page, through a link in a government database application, or by some other means.

An official database system then processes the request, searching through relevant records to find where the animal has been. Confidential premises identifiers identify more specifically premises locations where the animal has stayed. An initial trace search finds the premises identifiers of locations

where the diseased animal has lived and commingled with other animals. These potentially diseased animals then can be identified (10502).

Subsequent recursive searches (10602) using additional search terms, such as the time and date of move-in, a group number, narrow the search scope and limit the number of animals that need to be quarantined. This process is repeated until a complete list of animals that have commingled with the diseased animal is generated. Then the health officials can take the necessary precautions and intervening steps to quarantine, treat, or slaughter potentially infected animals.

The various stages of the technique can be performed separately or in various combinations, such as in conjunction with other stages.

V.) Technique for Implementing the Animal Identification Framework

FIG. 11 shows an example of a technique for implementing the disclosed animal identification framework (AIF). The AIF shown in FIG. 4 can be used to perform the technique. Alternatively, another framework can be used to perform the technique.

Systems such as those described in connection with the input data sources of FIG. 5 transmit (11102) animal information. In some implementations, the data is transmitted to data collection tools. The transmitted data is collected (11202) by the data collection system and stored in a repository. The transmitted data includes animal information, such as animal identifiers, premises identifiers, and other data that is typically associated with commercial animal data collection services.

For example, an owner may have a small herd with each animal tagged with an identification device properly encoded with a UAID. To prepare the animals for processing, the owner may move his small herd to a commercial feedlot, which acts as a designated data service provider, so the animals will fatten up before sale. The animals' movements are tracked. When the animals are sent to the commercial feedlot, the animal identifiers and any other information encoded on the identification devices are transmitted to a data service provider, which stores the information and reports to the owner that the animals arrived.

The data collector system then forwards all or part of the collected data to a data trustee system, such as the data trustee 7002 discussed in connection with FIG. 7. The data trustee system confirms receipt of the information, stores the forwarded information, and removes and/or hides non-official portions of the information (11302). For example, in the scenario described above, the collected data from the small animal herd is forwarded to the data trustee system. The data trustee verifies the owner's premises identifier and the animals' identifiers. A report is sent to the owner either confirming entry of the data in the database or detailing errors found in the data. In either case, the cattle owner has the opportunity to reconcile the data against his own records and correct any errors. In some embodiments, data service providers, data trustees and/or others may verify the validity of data (such as the validity of UAIDs or PIDs) before submitting the data to the official database.

A portion of the screened data may be sent (11402) to a government-accessible database system, such as the government database 7302 described in connection with FIG. 7. For example, in the above scenario, the data trustee filters non-official information from the data it received and only forwards official information, such as the animal identifier, to the government-accessible database system.

If one of the cattle owner's animals is diagnosed with an infectious disease, such as mad cow disease, using the animal

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identifier as a starting point, the government can request a trace report on the sick animal. Alternatively, the government may request a trace report on the premises occupied by the sick animal. As shown with the technique described in connection with FIG. 10, a trace history is generated (11502) by the data trustee system. The trace history provides enough data for government and health officials to impose proper quarantines and other measures to protect the health and well-being of animals, as well as human beings. For example, the diagnosed cow is slaughtered and burned to avoid spreading the disease to other animals. Those animals that had contact with the diseased animal may be quarantined for a period of time to be treated and to see if they manifest any symptoms of the disease.

In addition to use on animals, embodiments of the disclosed system also may be useful for tracking food products made from animals. The same principles apply. For example, the locations occupied by a food product (e.g., slaughterhouses, processing facilities, distributors and retailers) can be associated with a food product identifier in a database. Each food product can be packaged with a device (e.g., a bar code) encoded with a value that links the food product to the location information in the database. The actual location identifiers, however, can be kept confidential unless a health concern causes a government official to request them. For example, when a tainted food product is discovered, health inspectors may use an identifier for a food product in question to obtain a list of locations associated with the food product. Alternatively, the health inspectors may use a location identifier to obtain a list of food products associated with the location. This would help to protect the public from consuming tainted food products. For added benefit, some embodiments include integrating the disclosed AIF with food product tracking. For example, food products may have identifiers linked to the animal from which they originated.

Many of the tools and techniques herein can be described in the general context of computer-executable instructions, such as those included in program modules, being executed in a computing environment on a target real or virtual processor. Generally, program modules include routines, programs, libraries, objects, classes, components, data structures, etc. that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. The functionality of the program modules may be combined or split between program modules as desired in various embodiments. Computer-executable instructions for program modules may be executed within a local or distributed computing environment.

For the sake of presentation, the detailed description uses terms like "determine," "generate," "adjust," and "apply" to describe computer operations in a computing environment. These terms are high-level abstractions for operations performed by a computer and, in less the context indicates otherwise, should not be confused with acts performed by a human being. The actual computer operations corresponding to these terms vary depending on implementation.

VI.) Determining Respiratory or Circulatory Condition in Animals for Improved Management

This subsection describes various process steps and system components for evaluating respiratory or circulatory condition in animals and for managing the animals accordingly. These process steps and system components can be used in conjunction with the disclosed AIF.

Unlike external animal characteristics, the condition of an animal's respiratory and circulatory systems is not readily apparent from a superficial examination. Respiratory and cir-

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ulatory condition, however, such as respiratory damage from past respiratory disease, is one of the most important aspects of an animal's health.

Although the majority of this disclosure is directed to the evaluation of respiratory condition, it should be apparent that similar techniques can be used for the evaluation of circulatory condition. For example, the ultrasonic and radiographic imaging techniques described below can be used to generate images of an animal's heart or lymph nodes in addition to its lungs. Information from these images then can be used to make management decisions regarding the animal.

A.) Imaging

Some embodiments of the disclosed method include imaging at least one lung of a live animal. Several techniques can be used to image the lungs of live animals, such as ultrasonography, radiography (e.g., standard x-ray and computerized axial tomography) and magnetic resonance imaging. Of these techniques, ultrasonography is the least expensive and is particularly well suited to use on large animals raised for commercial food production.

Ultrasound imaging involves the direct introduction of high frequency sound waves from a transducer into the tissue to be evaluated. The echo resulting from these sound waves can be recorded as an image that provides valuable information about the internal characteristics of the tissue. The time delay between transmitting the sound waves and recording the echo can be used to indicate the depth of the tissue being imaged. The intensity of the echo can be used to distinguish between different types of tissue, because different materials have different levels of acoustical impedance. In this way, internal structures can be visualized, including overall organs and structures on or within organs, such as lesions.

Ultrasound imaging conventionally has been used in the obstetric care of livestock and to measure various livestock characteristics, such as back fat thickness and marbling. In very limited circumstances, ultrasound imaging also has been used to view the thoracic organs of live animals, including the lungs. There are two journal articles that describe ultrasound imaging of the lungs of cattle: U. Braun, et al., "Ultrasonographic Findings in Cattle with Pleuropneumonia," Vet. Rec. 141: 12-17 (1997) and U. Braun, et al., "Ultrasonography of the Lungs, Pleura, and Mediastinum in Healthy Cows," Am. J. Vet. Res. 57(4): 432-8 (1996). These articles are incorporated herein by reference. Both of these articles describe ultrasound imaging for the purpose of diagnosis of current disease rather than to evaluate damage from past disease.

Some embodiments of the disclosed method include imaging the lungs of live animals while the animals have substantially no symptoms of active respiratory illness. In these and other embodiments, imaging is not performed for the purpose of diagnosing current disease, but rather for the purpose of gathering information about respiratory condition that can be useful for future management decisions. Lung imaging can be conducted at various times during the lifecycle of an animal. At certain times, information about an animal's respiratory condition is more useful than at other times. In some disclosed embodiments, lung imaging is conducted shortly before a management decision, such as the sale of an animal or the slaughter of an animal. For example, lung imaging can be conducted at auction before an animal is sold, upon purchase of an animal for grazing or feeding or while the animal is undergoing finish feeding at a feedlot. Lung imaging also can be conducted at a time unrelated to the timing of a management decision. Information from such lung imaging can be recorded for later use. The process of recording and using information from lung imaging is described in greater detail below.

Most livestock require periodic maintenance. To improve efficiency, lung imaging can be conducted in conjunction with other maintenance. For example, lung imaging of cattle can be conducted while the cattle are receiving treatment in a chute or cattle working area. Some embodiments of the disclosed system include a measuring station. The imaging equipment can be stationary or mobile. Efficiency can be improved by successively imaging the lungs of two or more animals.

The procedure for imaging the lungs of animals can be derived from the imaging procedures used in other contexts. For example, ultrasound imaging procedures for imaging the lungs can be derived from obstetric ultrasound imaging procedures. For example, the lungs of cattle can be imaged with the same equipment used in back fat and marbling measurements. Suitable ultrasound devices include the Alkoia 500 with a 3.5 MHz transducer.

The transducer used in ultrasound imaging can be positioned externally or internally. If positioned externally, the skin on the thorax in the region of the lungs may be prepared prior to imaging. This preparation can include removing hair and applying a transmission gel or liquid. In cattle, the lungs generally can be observed in the area between the seventh intercostal space and the twelfth intercostal space. To produce images of the lungs, the transducer can be scanned along each intercostal space with its long axis parallel to the long axis of the ribs. The transducer can be positioned internally, for example, by sedating the animal and routing the transducer through the animal's esophagus. This technique is best for imaging the mediastinum rather than the outer portions of the lungs.

In some disclosed embodiments, ultrasound imaging is combined with an auditory evaluation of internal tissue characteristics. For example, a device can be used that includes both an ultrasound transducer and a stethoscope. Combining these instruments allows for the simultaneous visual and auditory evaluation of the internal tissue. The combined device can include, for example, a stethoscope mounted to an ultrasound transducer such that the diaphragm of the stethoscope is substantially coplanar with the portion of the transducer intended to contact the animal. The acoustical tubing leading to the diaphragm can be integrated with the wiring leading to the transducer. Sounds generated within the internal tissue also can be detected electronically. These sounds then can be reproduced in an earpiece or some other transmission device.

B.) Evaluation of Images

A significant amount of information can be gathered from images of the lungs of live animals. For example, these images can provide information concerning both present and past respiratory disease. Present respiratory disease may be observed, for example, as an accumulation of fluid in the pleura. Damage from past respiratory disease may be observed, for example, as scarring, fibrosis, necrosis or other types of lung lesions. Some embodiments of the disclosed method are directed primarily to the evaluation of damage from past respiratory disease.

Evaluation of the images can be performed at the time of imaging or at a later time. In some disclosed embodiments, a technician images the lungs and records the images, which then can be evaluated by another technician or a veterinarian. Each animal can be assigned a respiratory damage designation corresponding to the animal's degree of respiratory damage. For example, the evaluator may assign a qualitative designation (e.g., good, average or poor) or a quantitative designation (e.g., the percentage of damage).

Lung lesions in animals are similar in appearance to lung lesions in humans. Thus, information regarding evaluating lung lesions in humans can be used as a guide in the evaluation of lung lesions in animals. Similarly, information regarding evaluating lung lesions in one type of animal can be used as a guide in the evaluation of lung lesions in another type of animal.

Both ultrasound and radiographic images typically are grayscale images. In such images, a healthy animal lung typically appears with a dark gray border and a lighter gray interior. Lung tissue affected by an active respiratory disease typically appears darker than healthy lung tissue. Lung tissue damaged by a past respiratory disease typically appears even darker than lung tissue affected by an active respiratory disease. In some cases, lung tissue damaged by a past respiratory disease is very dark gray or black. Thus, darkened portions of ultrasound and radiographic images of the lung are evidence of active or past respiratory disease. Additional information can be gathered from the locations of the darkened portions. Respiratory disease typically is most severe in the bottom portion of the lung. Therefore, ultrasound or radiographic images that show dark gray or black areas in this bottom portion are strong evidence of active or past respiratory disease. The exact grayscale intensity differences between healthy lung tissue, lung tissue affected by active respiratory disease and lung tissue damaged by past respiratory disease can be discerned by comparing images from several animals, including animals with each of these conditions.

C.) Livestock Management

Information gathered from images of the lungs of live animals can be used to make management decisions regarding the animals. Such management decisions can include decisions regarding the treatment, care or disposition of the animals. Some examples of animal management decisions, as well as other relevant information, can be found in U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/645,462 and U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,805,075, 6,736,272, 6,592,517, 6,579,236, 6,547,726, 6,516,746, 6,318,289, 6,200,210, 6,135,055, 6,131,744, 6,000,361, 5,836,880, 5,803,906, 5,673,647, 5,573,002, 5,401,501, 5,369,032, RE34,776, 5,340,211, 5,315,505, 5,219,224, 5,008,821, 4,910,024, 4,889,433, 4,815,042, 4,733,971, which are incorporated herein by reference.

After evaluating respiratory damage, such as from an ultrasound or radiographic image, the designation corresponding to the degree of respiratory damage can be recorded. To facilitate recordation of the respiratory damage designation, some embodiments of the disclosed system include a data entry device near the measurement station where the respiratory damage is imaged or evaluated. Each designation can be associated with a unique identifier for the animal being assessed. This facilitates later reference to the respiratory damage designation to inform future management decisions. In some disclosed embodiments, the respiratory damage designation is entered and stored in an electronic database. In these and other embodiments, a user may be able to review the respiratory damage designation for each of a plurality of animals from a location remote from the animals.

As discussed above, livestock with significant amounts of respiratory damage from past respiratory disease typically do not perform as well as other livestock at the feedlot, do not respond as well as other livestock to treatment for active respiratory disease and produce lower quality meat than other livestock. According to some embodiments of the disclosed method, livestock managers can use the knowledge that certain animals will or will not have these undesirable characteristics to make better management decisions.

One management decision that can be informed by knowledge of respiratory damage is the purchase of an animal. Some disclosed embodiments include providing a respiratory damage designation to a buyer to aid the buyer in a decision regarding the purchase of an animal. Naturally, animals with a greater degree of respiratory damage may be purchased for a lower price than animals with a lesser degree of respiratory damage. In some cases, a lower purchase price may offset the additional risks associated with investing in an animal with significant respiratory damage.

Aside from purchase of an animal, respiratory damage information also may be useful for determining whether to treat an animal for a respiratory illness diagnosed after the respiratory damage information is gathered. As discussed above, treatment can include the administration of drugs, which can be expensive. A decision may be made, for example, not to incur the expense associated with treatment of animals with significant respiratory damage from past respiratory disease because these animals are less likely to recover than other animals. Alternatively, a decision may be made to treat animals with significant respiratory damage from past respiratory disease more aggressively than other animals if such treatment may prevent the otherwise likely death of such animals.

Other management decisions that may be affected by an animal's respiratory condition include how the animal should be fed and housed prior to slaughter. Typically, livestock are fed at a feedlot for several months prior to slaughter. Animals with significant respiratory damage gain less weight per day at a feedlot than other animals. Thus, a decision can be made to lessen or avoid the expense associated with the animal's stay at a feedlot. For example, animals with significant respiratory damage can be housed at a feedlot for shorter amounts of time than other animals or sent directly to slaughter without spending any time at a feedlot. The rates of respiratory disease increase dramatically while an animal is housed at a feedlot and animals with significant respiratory damage are less likely to recover from respiratory disease than other animals. Thus, bypassing the feedlot stage or shortening the amount of time an animal is housed at a feedlot also may help prevent the premature death of animals with significant respiratory damage. If an animal is sent to a feedlot, the animal's respiratory condition may affect management decisions regarding how the animal should be fed. Animals with significant respiratory damage, for example, may require less feed than other animals.

VII.) Electronic Cattle Management

This subsection describes various process steps and system components for electronic animal management. These process steps and system components can be used in conjunction with the disclosed AIF.

FIG. 12 illustrates a feedlot 10 which would typically include a series of feed pens (not shown) where cattle would be fed selected feed rations and watered during their stay in the feedlot. For example, four feed pens A, B, C and D are illustrated schematically in FIG. 18. In addition to feed pens, a feedlot incorporating the cattle management system and method includes an alley 12 leading through a series of manually or power-operated gates 14, 16, 18 and a one-way gate 20 to a chute 22.

The alley 12 leads from an alley 24, which communicates with both feed pens and receiving and holding pens, where cattle are received and held for a short period upon their delivery to the feedlot from a producer. The intersection of alley 24 and the alley 12 leading to the chute 22 is gated as indicated at 26 and 28 to control the admission of cattle into

alley 12 leading to the chute and to control the exit of cattle from sorting pens indicated at 30.

Gates 14, 16 and 18 subdivide the upper curved portion of the alley 12 into cattle holding sections 190, 192 of about 40 head apiece so as to control the delivery of cattle into a crowding section 32 through a crowd gate 18. The crowding section 32 narrows from its entrance to the one-way gate 20 so that cattle are forced single file through the gate 20 and into the chute area 22 which is a single-file chute.

Chute section 22 is subdivided into a series of longitudinally arranged stations 34, 36, 38, 40 and 42. These five stations are separated from one another and from the entrance 44 to the chute by entrance and exit gates 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56. The stations defined by these gates are only large enough to receive one animal at a time. The opening and closing of these gates are controlled by position sensors such as photoelectric cells under computer control to control the one at a time movement of animals through the chute. A larger scale depiction of the chute will be seen in FIG. 16.

Just downstream of the single-file chute are a series of the previously mentioned sorting pens 30, there being nine such pens illustrated in FIG. 12, including pens 30A, 30B, 30C, 30D, 30E, 30F, 30G, 30H and 30I. Below these pens in FIG. 12 is an alley 58 leading from the left-hand pen exits to the alleys 12 and 24. In addition, there is a single-file narrow alley 60 between the left-hand series of sorting pens 30A, 30C, 30D, 30E, 30G and the right-hand series of sorting pens 30B, 30D, 30F and 30H. From the layout of FIG. 12 it will be apparent that any animal proceeding through the chute and not sorted into one of the sorting gates 30A-30H will automatically end up in sorting pen 30I.

Alley 60 is normally isolated from the entrances to each of the eight sorting pens 30A-30H by a computer-operated entrance gate 62 at the entrance to each sorting pen. It will be noted that there is no entrance gate to the final sorting pen 30I. Each sorting pen also has an exit gate 64 at its opposite end opening into an alley used to direct the cattle from the sorting pens to another destination to be described in greater detail below. The exit gates 64 on pens 30A, 30C, 30E and 30G on the left-hand side of the alley 60 in FIG. 12 open into an alley 66 leading through control gates 68, 70 back to alley 58 where cattle can be directed either back through alley 12 or into alley 24 leading to the feed pens.

Each station of the single file chute 22 is set up either to prepare each animal for measurement or processing, or to actually measure or process the animal. For example, in FIG. 12, station 34 is termed the "get ready" station where one animal is admitted from the chute entrance area 44. Once the animal enters the "get ready" station 34, gate 46 closes and gate 48 remains closed so the animal remains isolated at that station. Then gate 48 is opened so that the animal enters the next station 36. Station 36 is where certain external dimensions of each animal are measured. This is preferably done through a video-imaging device or scanner suitable for this purpose such as one known commercially as an MSI Scanner available from Cattle Scanning Systems (C.S.S.) of Rapid City, S. Dak. Another video-imaging measurement system for cattle is disclosed in Hayes, U.S. Pat. No. 4,745,472.

After the animal's external dimensions are measured, gate 50 is opened and the animal proceeds into the third station 38 in the chute, which contains a scale on which the animal is weighed. The scale used can be any of a number of commercially available scales but should be capable of generating an electronic signal for recording the weight at a remote location. Also at the scale station or at another desired station, an electronic identification (EID) tag is attached to the animal's ear. This EID tag remains attached to the animal throughout

its residence in the feedlot and its shipment to the packing plant where it is removed upon slaughter. Through this EID tag, the animal can not only be identified but its location can be tracked and its measurement and performance data correlated to the animal throughout the duration of its feedlot stay, through its shipment to the packing plant, and until slaughter. One suitable EID tag for this purpose is manufactured by Allflex International and is described in greater detail in U.S. Pat. No. 5,315,505. The disclosure of U.S. Pat. No. 5,315,505 is incorporated herein by reference. The Allflex EID tag is a transponder which operates through a nearby antenna and an integrator reader also available from Allflex International. Each EID tag emits a signal unique to the animal to which it is attached, which is electronically "read" by the antenna and communicated to a host computer via a computer interface unit.

After an animal's weight is recorded and its EID tag attached, it moves through gate 52 to the next measuring station 40 where its internal backfat content is measured using an ultrasound measuring means and technique. For this purpose, the animal must be held fairly still, station 40 is a "squeeze chute," well known in the feedlot industry. The squeeze chute has a rear gate that pushes against the rear of an animal while its head is stabilized in a "head catcher." The ultrasound measuring system used at station 40 is similar to the experimental system used by Professor John Brethour at Kansas State University's Fort Hays Experiment Station, described in the September, 1994 issue of D J Feeder Management magazine. While the animal is within measuring station 40, circulatory or respiratory system imaging also can be performed, as discussed above.

After backfat measurement, the gate 54 is opened and the animal proceeds to station 42 for processing. Station 42 is also a squeeze chute. Typically, processing at station 42 will include individual drug administration, growth hormone implantation, castration and dehorning. After processing, the chute gate 56 is opened and the animal is sorted into one of the sorting pens in a manner to be described hereinafter.

The enlarged schematic version of the single-file chute 22 shown in FIG. 16 is sufficiently similar to the chute 22 shown schematically in FIG. 12 that the same reference numerals will be used in describing both chutes. With reference to FIG. 16, it includes the same five processing and measuring stations 34, 36, 38, 40 and 42 as in FIG. 12. However, at the downstream end of the chute 22 of FIG. 16 there are only seven sorting pens 30 shown and designated sort pens 1-7, rather than nine such pens as shown in FIG. 12.

As shown most clearly in FIG. 16, the single-file chute includes at its downstream end just downstream of chute exit gate 56 from the processing station 42 a pair of access gates 72, 74 for the admission of feedlot personnel into the chute when necessary. These gates may be manually operated.

From FIG. 16 it will also be apparent that sorting into one of the several sorting pens is accomplished after each animal proceeds through all five stations of the chute by opening an entrance gate to one of the sorting pens while the others remain closed. Thus, for example, if an animal is to be sorted into sorting pen 3 in FIG. 16 its entrance gate 62 would open to the position 62a shown while the entrance gate 62 to all other sorting pens remain closed, thereby directing the animal into sorting pen 3.

As previously mentioned, each sorting pen entrance gate 62 and each of the chute gates 46, 48, 50, 52, 54 and 56 is operated via position sensors indicated schematically at 76 in FIG. 16 in conjunction with a host computer 78 through chute gate interfaces indicated schematically at 80. Similarly, sort

pen entrance gates 62 are operated by the position sensors 82 controlled by the host computer 78 through the sort gate interfaces 84.

The measurement taken at each of the measuring stations 36, 38 and 40 of the chute, for each animal passing through the chute, transmits a signal indicative of the measurement for that animal through an appropriate interface to the host computer 78, where the measurement data is entered and stored for use in calculating various performance characteristics of the animal.

Each measurement is correlated with a specific animal through the animal's EID tag as it passes from station to station through the chute. More specifically, the video imaging measurement (VIM) data is transmitted through a VIM interface 86 to the host computer 78. Weight data for the same animal is transmitted from the scale at station 38 through a scale interface 88 to the host computer 78. Then the ultrasound data for the same animal is transmitted through the USBF interface 90 to the host computer 78. The ultrasound data can include, for example, backfat data and respiratory condition data. Finally, any drugs administered to the animal or other procedures performed on the animal at the processing station 42 are transmitted through the processing interface 92 to the host computer where such data is correlated with the animal processed.

Reference is made to the aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 5,315,505 for a detailed description of how animal health data and drug administration data would be entered into the host computer from a processing station for a given animal.

With reference to FIG. 13, a pen sorter 94 is disclosed. There could be one or several pen sorters 94 in a feedlot. Also, it is possible that the sorting portion of the pen sorter 94, which portion is to be described presently, could be designed as a portable unit that would be transported to a particular feed pen within the feedlot for use there within the 30 days or so prior to scheduled shipment of the group of animals within the feed pen so that the shipment date for each animal in the pen could be optimized for maximum feed efficiency and value.

In any case, the pen sorter is designed to enable weighing of individual animals on a frequent basis, such as daily or even more frequently, without removing the animals from their feed pens and without the need to send them back through the single-file chute described with respect to FIGS. 12 and 16.

The illustrated pen sorter 94 is subdivided into two feed pens 95, 96 designated feed pen A and feed pen B, separated by a partition or fence 97. Each feed pen in turn is also separated by partitions 98, 99 from adjacent water pens 100, 101, designated water pen A and water pen B. Water pens A and B are, in turn, separated from adjacent shipping pens 102, 103 by partitions 104, 105, the shipping pens being designated ship pen A and ship pen B. The ship pens in turn are separated from one another by another fence or partitions 106. Each feed pen includes a feed bunk 108 into which the daily feed ration of the animals in those pens is deposited and to which the animals in the feed pen have ready access. The water pens and ship pens are provided with respective watering troughs 110, 111, 112 and 113 so that the animals within those pens can access drinking water as desired.

The heart of the pen sorter 94 is its array of gates for directing animals in the feed pens A and B to desired locations within the larger confines of the pen sorter 94, on an individual animal basis, based on measured performance characteristics of each animal, other data such as market conditions, and a desired shipping date.

First it should be noted that animals within feed pen A are free to pass between such pen and its adjacent water pen A through a two-way gate 114 to access feed and water as

desired. The same is true with respect to animals within feed pen B through a two-way gate 115 between feed pen B and water pen B. However, unless desired by feedlot personnel or dictated by the management system, cattle cannot pass from one feed pen to another or from one water pen to another and cannot pass from either water pen into either shipping pen.

A single scale stall 116 is positioned between water pen A and water pen B and is sized to accept one animal at a time. The scale stall is equipped with one scale at 117, which can be of a type similar to that used in the scale station of the single-file chute as previously described. The scale is set up to transmit automatically the weight reading of an animal through a suitable interface to the host computer. To identify the animal being weighed, the stall is also equipped with an EID tag identification means as previously described for receiving and transmitting the identification of an animal being weighed to the host computer.

Access to the scale stall is either from feed pen A or feed pen B, as desired, through one of two shuttle gates 118, 120. Both shuttle gates 118 and 120 comprise a pair of parallel gate arms 121, 122 which move in unison from a scale entrance position, as shown with respect to shuttle gate 120, to a scale blocking position, as shown with respect to shuttle gate 118 in FIG. 13. When in its scale blocking position, each shuttle gate has its arms 121, 122 directed toward a one-way gate leading into the adjacent water pen. For example, feed pen A shows shuttle gate 118 with its shuttle arms in a position for directing animals through the one-way gate 124 into water pen A. When shuttle gate 120 is in a comparable position, its arms would direct cattle through a one-way gate 126 into water pen B. Thus, depending on the position of shuttle gate 118, animals from feed pen A can be directed either through one-way gate 124 into water pen A or into the scale stall 117. A one-way gate 128 at the entrance to the scale stall prevents an animal that has entered the scale stall from backing out. Similarly, an animal within feed pen B can be directed by shuttle gate 120 either into the scale stall 117 to be weighed or through the one-way gate 126 into water pen B.

Of course, it will appear that an animal in feed pen A or in feed pen B can at any time pass through the two-way gates 114 and 115 between those pens and their respective water pens A and B, and back again to their respective feed pens. It will also be apparent that any animal within water pen A can also pass through a one-way gate 130 back to feed pen A. However, unless other control gates are operated, an animal in water pen A cannot pass to either shipping pen A or shipping pen B or into feed pen B. Similarly, any animal in water pen B can pass through either the two-way gate 115 or a one-way gate 132 back to feed pen B but cannot pass into shipping pen B, feed pen A or water pen A without operation of appropriate control gates.

Once an animal is within the scale stall 116, it must pass forwardly out of the stall through a complex array of sorting gates indicated generally at 134 into one of four pens, either water pen A, shipping pen A, water pen B, or shipping pen B. The operation of the sorting gate array 134 is under computer control. The scale stall 116 is provided with an EID tag antenna to identify the animal within the scale stall to the computer system, which then determines which pen the animal is to proceed to from the scale stall, after which the computer operates the sorting gate array 134 in a manner to direct the animal to the appropriate pen.

Sorting gate array 134 includes three controllable shuttle gates 136, 137 and 138. In addition, it includes a one-way gate 140 leading from the sorting area just downstream from the scale stall into water pen A, a one-way gate 142 leading from the same sorting area into shipping pen A, a third one-way

gate 144 leading from the sorting area into shipping pen B and a fourth one-way gate 146 leading from the sorting area into water pen B.

The following will illustrate that an animal in, for example, feed pen A can be directed through the scale stall 116 and then either back to feed pen A, to feed pen B, to shipping pen A or to shipping pen B. The same is true with respect to an animal in feed pen B. Thus, pen sorter 94 is capable of effecting a four-way sort.

To illustrate, an animal in feed pen A with the shuttle gate 118 in the position shown, can pass freely between feed pen A and water pen A and back to feed pen A. However, with the shuttle gate 118 shifted to its position shown in dashed lines in FIG. 13, an animal in feed pen A will be directed through the one-way gate 128 into the scale stall 116 where it will be weighed and identified to the computer through its EID tag. The computer will then determine to which pen it should be sorted from the scale stall and actuate the appropriate gates to accomplish the desired sort. For example, if it is desired to return the animal to feed pen A, sorting gate 136 is shifted downward to its dashed line position shown thereby allowing the animal to move through the sorting area and through the one-way gate 140 back to water pen A where it can move freely back to feed pen A, either through the two-way gate 114 or the one-way gate 130.

If it is desired that the animal be sorted from feed pen A to feed pen B, sort gate 136 is shifted upward to its dashed line position shown, allowing the animal to travel from the scale stall freely through the sorting area and one-way gate 146 to water pen B, from which the animal can move freely through either two-way gate 115 or one-way gate 132 to feed pen B.

If it is desired that the animal move from the scale stall 116 to shipping pen A, sort gate 136 is moved to its downward position in FIG. 13 and control gate 137 is moved to its upward position shown in dashed lines in FIG. 13, enabling the animal to travel through the sorting area and through one-way gate 142 into shipping pen A.

If it is desired that the animal move from the scale stall to shipping pen B, sorting gate 136 is moved upward, control gate 138 is moved downward to its dashed line position, and the animal can thus move freely through the sorting area and one-way gate 144 into shipping pen B.

From the foregoing it will be understood that animals within feed pens A and B can be weighed as frequently as desired and sorted four ways without moving the animals any appreciable distance. Thus the pen sorter 94 provides an ideal finishing pen for use in determining the exact day within a shipping window of several days when an animal should be shipped to the packing plant for slaughter to realize the maximum return on the investment in such animal, considering animal performance, market conditions and feed efficiency.

FIG. 14 illustrates a hypothetical timeline in the management of cattle. Upon arrival of a lot of cattle in the feedlot, or before, the prior history of the lot would be entered in the host computer 78, as indicated at 148. Such prior history data is illustrated, for example, in the cattle received report by "load" shown in Table 3A. The report indicates such things as the date the load was received, the load number, the number of head in the load, the sex of the cattle in the load and the average weight of the animals in the load. It also indicates cost information. It also gives information such as the age of the cattle, the breed, the type of pasture the load has been on and health, nutrition, stress and weather conditions applicable to the load. It also indicates the number of days the load has been feeding on pasture. Some or all of this data may be used in later calculations by the computer to determine the optimum end date (OED) or days to finish (DTF), of the group or

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individual animals in the group. This date is also sometimes referred to as the optimum marketing or shipping date.

On the day of their arrival, indicated on the timeline at 150, each animal in the load is measured, processed and electronically identified with an EID tag in the one-way single-file chute 22 previously described. Then, if desired, the measured and processed animals may be sorted into the sorting pens 30 in a rough sort by type (breed), weight, age, or a first estimated OED or DTF, although such a first "rough" first sort is optional.

From the sorting pens, the animals are moved to feed pens, either by sort or on an ad hoc basis, where they are fed for a period of time, such as 45 days as shown in FIG. 14, although possibly substantially longer than that.

If a 45 day weight or measurement is desired for the animals, they would be moved from their feed pens on the 45th day as indicated at 152 back through the single-file chute, where they would be remeasured. From the initial measurement and remeasurement data, the performance of each animal would be calculated by the computer, and its performance assessed. The animals would then be sorted into the sorting pens 30 according to their performance characteristics. Poorly performing animals would be culled from the group and removed from the feedlot operation as "salvage." The remaining resorted animals would be returned to the feed pens according to their sorts. Animals with respiratory or circulatory damage indicated by imaging also can be moved to the salvage group.

Then 60-120 days into the feeding period, indicated by the range 154 in FIG. 14, the animals from at least two feed pens at once would be moved from their pens back through the single-file chute for remeasuring once again on an individual basis. The data from these measurements together with prior data for each animal would be used by the computer to calculate a new OED or DTF for each animal and other performance criteria, such as average daily gain (ADG) and feed proration for each animal. From the single-file chute the animals would be resorted once again according to predetermined criteria such as DTF or OED. A projected shipping sequence for each animal could also be calculated at this time. Then the animals would be returned to the feed pens according to the newly determined sorts. The animals then could be removed from their pens for shipment according to their calculated shipping sequence. Whenever an animal is moved in the feedlot, its identification and data, via computer, moves with it. Its location at any time can be determined remotely by computer, and its performance data assessed.

Alternatively, a portable pen sorter of the type shown in FIG. 13 could be installed in the feed pen. Each animal would be carefully monitored and weighed, perhaps on a daily basis, until it reached its optimum shipping weight or value, at which time it would be shipped to the packer, indicated at 156.

Alternatively, animals within the feed pens could be sent to a finishing pen such as the pen sorter 94 shown on FIG. 13 where it would be confined, monitored and weighed frequently within a shipping window such as a 30 day shipping window. Within that shipping window indicated at 158, each animal as determined by frequent weight checks and market conditions, would be directed from its feed pen, such as feed pen A or feed pen B in FIG. 13, to appropriate shipping pen A or B when it is ready for shipment.

Alternatively, during an animal's shipping window, the animal could be weight checked simply by sending it back through the single-file chute periodically until it reaches its ideal shipping weight, at which time it would be shipped to the packer 156.

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Alternatively, a specific shipping date for a given animal could be determined by issued inspection while the animals are within their 30-day shipping window.

When the animal leaves the feedlot, its EID tag travels with it. Its historical and performance data records would be maintained by the feedlot, indicated at 160, and also transmitted to the producer, indicated at 162. At the same time, the packer would record the carcass data for each slaughtered animal, identified by its EID tag, and transmit the carcass data, as indicated at 164, to the feedlot and producer for correlation with the animal's live performance data from the feedlot.

The correlation can be useful to the feedlot in projecting optimum end dates (OED), initial feed proration and production costs for future animals of a given type and similar history. This data can also be useful to cattle producers in determining which breeds and individual breeding animals are most desirable from the standpoint of market value and producing the best quality of beef. The important thing to note is that the performance of each animal is tracked on an individual basis from the time it arrives in the feedlot until the time it is shipped and slaughtered, when its carcass data is collected and correlated with its performance data for use by the feedlot and producer in managing future beef production.

Another important feature of the system is its ability to update an individual animal's performance projections on a daily basis. For example, the DTF for an animal will be current for the day the projection is assessed. The same is true for other projections such as projected weight, etc.

Although FIG. 14 illustrates one possible processing sequence of cattle including measuring and remeasuring steps and sorting and resorting steps for optimum feed efficiency and return, many other sequences are possible as illustrated in FIGS. 15A, 15B and 15C. For example in the sequences of FIGS. 15A, 15B and 15C the 45 day remeasurement is eliminated and instead a single 60-75 day remeasurement and uniformity sort are performed.

Referring to FIG. 15A, a load of cattle is received in the feedlot at 166 and within a few hours, measured at 167 and processed at 168 in the single-file chute. From the chute they are directed into the feed pens at 169 without an initial sort. They are fed in the feed pens for 60-75 days, then returned to the single-file chute for remeasuring at 170 and possibly reimplantation of a growth hormone, if necessary. After remeasuring, the animals undergo a uniformity sort as determined by the computer, and directed into the appropriate sorting pens 172. Upon completion of the sorting operation, they are returned to the feeding pens 174 according to their sort groups and there fed for a period of 60 to 80 days. As the cattle within the feed pens approach their individual optimum end dates they would be selected for shipment either visually, by remeasurement at the single-file chute, or by frequent reweighing in a portable pen sorter of the type shown in FIG. 13. Following selection at step 176 the animal would be shipped as at 178 to the packer.

The processing sequence of FIG. 15B for an individual animal is the same down through the initial receiving, measuring and processing steps. However after measuring and processing, according to FIG. 15B there is an initial sort step 180 that can be a rough type sort as in FIG. 14 or can be based on a first rough estimated optimum end date for each individual animal. Following the first sort 180, the animals are directed by sort group into feed pens at 169 for a feeding period of 60-75 days. At the end of the 60-75 day period the animals are removed from their pens, either individually or in groups, and returned to the single-file chute for remeasuring at 170.

After remeasuring in the single-file chute, each animal is resorted at 182 by the computer, which opens the appropriate sorting gates of the sorting pens 30. From the sorting pens, the animals are redirected back to the feed pens at 174 and placed into the pens according to their sorting groups. They remain in the feed pens for a period of 60-80 days, after which they are individually, or by group, selected for shipment, according to their last calculated OED. As previously indicated, this selection for shipment can be fine-tuned through the use of either a portable pen sorter or the pen sorter 94 of FIG. 13. After selection, the selected animals are shipped at step 178 to the packing plant for slaughter, where the carcass data and EID tag are collected.

The optional cattle processing procedure of FIG. 15C is the same as the procedure outlined in FIG. 15A down through the initial sorting step 172. However, thereafter the animals, according to the procedure in FIG. 15C, are directed back to the feed pens according to sorting group at step 173 for a feeding period of only 30-40 days. Thereafter, the animals, or at least selected animals, from the feed pens are removed to finish feed pens, such as pen sorters 94 in FIG. 13, for a finish feeding step 175 for an additional 30-40 days, which represents the shipping window 158 indicated in FIG. 14. Within the finish feeding pens, the animals can be sorted, resorted, weighed, reweighed and selected on an individual animal basis for sorting to one of the two shipping pens A and B for shipment to the packer at step 178.

FIG. 18 illustrates, in greater detail, a representative cattle processing sequence in a feedlot. Steps in the processing sequence are numbered 1-9 along the left-hand side of FIG. 18.

In step 1, as indicated at 184, several lots of cattle arrive at the feedlot at about the same time, indicated as lots 1-4. When they arrive, the previous history data of the lots and individual animals in the lots is entered into the host computer by data entry means (not shown) such as a computer keyboard. The previous history, as already mentioned, may include information such as shown in Table 3A.

According to step 2, after the cattle arrive they are directed into receiving or holding pens 186, typically by lot, where they are held just prior to initial processing. The time spent in the holding pens 186 will depend on when the lots arrived in the feedlot. For example, when they arrive in the middle of a night, they would be retained in the holding pens until feedlot personnel arrive early the next morning to process them. When ready for processing, the cattle from the holding pens 186 are directed through the appropriate alleys to the one-way single-file chute 22 where they are one-by-one led through the various chute stations, sequentially, including the get ready station 34, the video image measuring station 36, the weighing station 38 and the ultrasound measuring station 40. During this process the EID and visual eartags are applied as well, and the measurement data from each of these stations is transmitted through the appropriate interfaces to the host computer 78 for recording, collection and storage. At the processing station 42 each animal is implanted with a growth hormone, given medication as needed, and dehorned and castrated as needed.

Using available information and data on the group being processed and the individual animals in the group, an initial optimum end date (OED) is determined, either through calculation by the computer or by the operator. A marketing target grade for each animal and for the group (an average) is also assigned, either by the operator from a list of data or through calculation by the computer, depending on the capability of the computer program used. In addition, at this point a projected feed intake for each animal is calculated and

assigned and used in prorating the total feed ration used by a group of animals within a single feed pen, so that a fairly accurate cost of feed per animal can be calculated and assessed to the owner.

Referring to FIG. 36, the process and formulas for calculating "days to finish" (DTF) is illustrated, followed by an example calculation based on hypothetical measurements of an animal passing through the single-file chute.

Referring to FIG. 37, an alternative method of calculating DTF for an individual animal is disclosed. Following the figure is an example calculation based on hypothetical measurements taken at two different measuring dates during an animal's feeding period at the feedlot.

Using the method of FIG. 36, an animal arriving at the feedlot, after being measured in the single-file chute, is calculated to have a projected DTF of 141 days. This represents the total number of days the animal is projected to be at the feedlot before it is ready for shipment to the packing plant. However, according to FIG. 37, the same animal using the different method of FIG. 37, is calculated to have a DTF of 165 days, based on its initial measurements upon arrival at the feedlot.

In Table 1 there are set forth limiting factors to DTF projections based on maximum and minimum live weight for the animal. An example calculation follows. According to the calculation, if a maximum hot carcass weight of 800 pounds and a minimum hot carcass weight of 500 pounds is desired in the end product, the maximum live weight of the animal should be 1230 pounds and the minimum live weight of the animal should be limited to 768 pounds. Thus, if the OFW (optimum finish weight) as used in the example calculation following FIG. 36 results in a maximum live weight that exceeds 1230 pounds or a minimum live weight of less than 768 pounds, the maximum or minimum live weights from the example calculation of Table 1 should be used in the FIG. 36 calculation rather than the optimum finish weight (OFW) originally used.

It will be noted that the formula and calculation of FIG. 36 includes a "Cornell Cattle Systems" formulation. This is a well-known formula in the cattle industry which includes inputs of OFW, condition score (backfat measurement), current weight, ration, environmental factors, feed additives and input program used.

FIG. 38 shows the calculation and the process of calculating feed proration to each animal as determined following the first set of measurements at the single-file chute. FIG. 38 is followed by an example calculation using the formula and method indicated in the figure. In the figure DMI indicates dry matter intake for a given feed period and is indicated herein-after as (DMI). In the same method of calculation the ADG indicates the average daily gain for a given animal. All other measurements used in the formula will be self-explanatory. As indicated in the formula, the frame score is determined by a formula using both hip height and current weight. The condition score for an animal is determined using both the backfat measurement and current weight. In the example, the proration of feed fed in a given period (P1) is calculated for each animal. From the calculation a proration ratio is indicated and applied to the 780 total pounds of feed fed to a pen of four animals during the P1 feed period, resulting in a feed period total proration of feed among the four animals as indicated in the last column of the calculation. It will be noted that of the four animals, the proration ranges from a low of 190.9 pounds to a high of 206.2 pounds. This feed proration formula and calculation is used only for the first feed period following the first measurement of the animals. Following the

second and subsequent measurements, a different feed proportion formula and calculation is used as indicated in FIGS. 39a and 39b.

FIG. 40 illustrates how the calculations of DTF from 2FIGS. 36 and 37 (DTF1 and DTF2) can be used to create an average DTF (DTF3) for use in projecting when an individual animal will be ready to be shipped from the feedlot. The numbers used in 6FIGS. 36, 37 and FIG. 40 are coefficients that are obtained empirically from experience feeding cattle at a prototype feedlot. The coefficients are defined and correlated with the coefficient numbers used, in Table 2.

line) along two different curves, in terms of the number of days the animal is on feed (DOF). From the calculations and plotting it is determined, in the example, that the point P4 on the backfat curve should be selected for shipment of the animal. This is at 140 days into the feeding period, the most economical point for shipping. Beyond that point, the animal's backfat will exceed 0.7 inches, resulting in the animal's carcass being degraded and thus becoming less valuable. The P1 and P2 end points would result in a carcass with too much backfat. The P3 endpoint would be below the backfat limit, so the animal can be fed beyond this point to increase its value.

TABLE 1

Limiting factors to DTF Projections	
Maximum Live Weight (Max_LW)	
Minimum Live Weight (Min_LW)	
$\text{Max_LW} = (\text{Max_HCW} * 1.54) - (\text{OBF} * 2.540005 * 69.91) + 69.47$	
$\text{Min_LW} = (\text{Min_HCW} * 1.54) - (\text{OBF} * 2.540005 * 69.91) + 69.47$	
Maximum Hot Carcass Weight (Max_HCW): User Input	
Minimum Hot Carcass Weight (Min_HCW): User Input	
Optimum Backfat (OBF): User Input	
Example Calculations	
User Inputs:	
Max_HCW:	800 lbs
Min_HCW:	500 lbs
OBF:	0.40 in. for frame score 4
Max_LW =	$(800 * 1.54) - (0.40 * 2.540005 * 69.91) + 69.47 = 1230 \text{ lbs}$
Min_LW =	$(500 * 1.54) - (0.40 * 2.540005 * 69.91) + 69.47 = 768 \text{ lbs}$

TABLE 2

DTF Calculation Coefficients	
Frame - Linear Regression Equation	
C-1	Intercept for Regression Equation (=18.091475)
C-2	Estimate for Weight parameter (0.03365)
C-3	Estimate for Hip Weight parameter (1.121666)
C-4	Estimate for the parameter of Current Weight divided by Hip Height (2.003599)
C-5	Estimate for the parameter of Hip Height Squared (-0.012205)
C-6	Estimate for the parameter of Current Weight divided by Hip Height Squared (13.133611)
BFDR-1 Linear Regression Equation	
C-7	Intercept (0.01252987)
C-8	Estimate for Frame Score Parameter (-0.00064982)
BFDR-2 Logarithmic Regression Equation	
C-9	Lower limit fat Deposition Rate (0.00668)
C-10	Upper limit Fat Deposition Rate (0.01188)
New Frame	
C-11	Upper Deposition Rate (-0.01253)
C-12	Lower Deposition Rate (-0.00065)
OBF - Conversion Tables for Frame to Back Fat	
DTF1 - Logarithmic Regression Equation	
OFW - Regression Equation	
OFW - Regression Equation	
C-13	Intercept (366.7)
C-14	Estimate for OFW (33.3)
C-15	Pounds to Kilogram Conversion Factor (2.2)
ADG - Cornell Model Output of ADG	

The following example illustrates how a final DTF calculation can be made for determining exactly when an animal should be shipped to slaughter, based on economics (value) and the prior DTF1 and DTF2 calculations of FIGS. 36 and 37. FIG. 41 is a graph that plots selling price (left-hand vertical line) and backfat on the animal (right-hand vertical

Example

- 15 Individual Animal Final DTF Calculation
- 1) Input: Sex, Beginning Weight, OFW, Mature Weight, Breed, Hide, Age, Number of Head, Purchase Date, Hip Height, Calculated Frame Score, Initial Back Fat, Flesh Condition Code, Ration Composition/Energy, Environmental Factors.
- 20 2) Run Cornell Calculation Method One.fwdarw. Outputs for 6 periods on feed. Average Weight for Period. Dry Matter Intake for Period.
- 25 3) ADG for Period
DOF for Period
4) Calculation Gain for Period=ADG. DOF Period.
20 5) Period Feed Cost of Gain=DMI.times.DOF Period.ti-
mes.Cost Per Pound+(Yardage cost per day.times.DOF Per-
30 iod.div.Gain for Period)
6) Feed Interest Cost of Gain=Calculated for all except period one
35 7) Cattle Interest Cost of Gain for Period I=Daily interest rate.times.number of days in period=\$.div.the gain (calcu-
lated by average weight for period less initial weight)
8) Total nos. 4)+5)+6)=Total incremental Cost of Gain
9) Calculate and project for all 6 periods and plot projection graph
40 10) Plot OFW (Mature Weight) on TCOG line at P-1 at 151
DOF to reach 1006 pounds (28% Body Fat Target).
11) Plot the location where total incremental COG=Selling Price (\$0.70/lb) on TCOG line at P-2 at 164 DOF to reach
1041 pounds.
12) Plot Back Fat Deposition Rate-use Initial Back Fat in the
45 DTF2 Method Two calculation to determine the rate. The rate
is used to compound the initial back fat measurement daily for
the entire period and is plotted on the graph as BF.
13) Plot the 0.6 BF Target on the Fat deposition rate line at P-3
for 0.6 at 123 DOF to reach 920 pounds.
50 14) Final DTF Number in this case is P-4, which is the
predetermined maximum Back Fat limit which is selected by
the computer program. This is calculated to be 140 DOF at
975 pounds. The final DTF number cannot be P-1, P-2 or P-3
because:
55 a) P-1 exceeds Maximum BF to incur a dollar discount.
b) P-2 exceeds Maximum BF to incur a dollar discount as well
as causing incremental cost of gain to exceed selling price
resulting in decreased profit.
c) P-3 is the original BF target but, since the animal is still
making profit, it should be fed longer.

As soon as the animal exits the processing station 42 to enter the sorting pen area, the computer 78 has calculated the indicated characteristics of the animal, such as projected OFW, projected ADG, projected DTF and a projected feed proration ratio according to the formula and process outlined in FIG. 38. At this point a sort may or may not be done as indicated at step 3A of the management process. If a sort is to

be done, it would likely be a rough sort by animal type, weight, or OED. At this point it would usually be too early to cull animals from the feedlot because there is no performance data yet accumulated on any animal.

In the illustration of FIG. 38 the measured and processed animals would go directly to step 4 of the process, which is directly to one of four feed pens 188, feed pen A, feed pen B, feed pen C or feed pen D. There they would be provided a selected feed ration and water for a selected period that may range from 45-75 days but more typically in the 60-75 day range. During this first feeding period each animal's records are maintained and the cost of the feed ration delivered to each pen would be prorated among the individual animals for assessment to their respective owners.

At the end of the first feeding period, two or more of the feed pen cattle groups in the feed pens A-D are selected for remeasurement at the same time. This selection may be based on one or more of several factors such as the similarity of their group average OED or DTF, breed type, marketing target yields or other factors. Each animal in the selected groups is directed back through, for example, the alley 24 from its feed pen through the gates 26, 28 and back through the alley 12 leading to the single-file chute. Once within the alley 12, the animals are led into two different holding sections of the alley as defined by the manually operated alley gates 14, 16, 18 defining holding sections 190, 192. Each of the holding sections 190, 192 is capable of holding approximately 40 head of cattle. From the holding section 192 the cattle are led through a hydraulically operated crowd gate 18 into the crowding section 32 where cattle are directed one-at-a-time through a hydraulically powered one-way gate 20 leading to a single-file entrance section 44 into the one-way chute 22.

Then the animals are admitted one at a time and single file into the chute 22 where they are measured externally and internally, and weighed once again. In the processing section 42 the animals may also be reimplanted with a growth hormone as needed. The measurement data for each animal is automatically entered into the computer 78 via data entry means coupled to the measuring apparatus and there correlated with the EID of the animal.

With the historical data, original measurement data and the remeasurement data for each animal, that animal's performance through the first feeding period can be accurately calculated and gauged, much more so than with the projected performance data from the original measurements alone. Thus, upon remeasurement, each animal's ADG, OFW and DTF (or OED) is recalculated and used as the basis for a prediction of future performance and a shipping date or at least shipping window, using the methods previously outlined with respect to FIGS. 36 and 37, and Table 1. In addition, each animal's feed proration is recalculated using the method and formula outlined in FIGS. 39a and 39b. This gives a much more accurate feed proration for each animal than the initial proration determined according to FIG. 38. This new feed proration will be used to calculate each animal's feed intake for the next feeding period. Of course, for the indicated calculations, both the rate of weight gain (ADG) and the total amount of change (gain) and the fat (fat deposition rate) and external dimensions (frame, muscular growth) are used in calculating the new projected DTF and OEW for each animal.

At the same time, each animal's DTF as calculated is checked against any drug withdrawal and safe-to-ship information available from the health history of the animal, also stored in the computer system according to the system described in the aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 5,315,505. Any OED or DTF calculated by the computer or otherwise would be adjusted as dictated by the drug withdrawal and safe-to-ship information from the animal health system and prior to any assignment of the animal to any particular sort group. This drug withdrawal and safe-to-ship check might be done

either by computer or manually by the operator. Also before any growth promotant drug or implant is administered to the animal in the processing station, a decision would be made on whether to administer at all based on the calculated DTF or OED, drug cost, and efficacy. In short, no growth promotant drug need be given if the animal is predicted to remain in the feedlot for only a short time following a remeasurement.

As each animal leaves the single-file chute, the computer has determined its sort group and allocated a particular sort pen in which to direct it from the chute. Steps 6 and 7 of the diagram of FIG. 18 represent a sorting procedure that may be used following a remeasurement. Essentially, each animal is directed to one of the seven sort pens of FIG. 16 temporarily. Each of the seven sort pens indicated in step 6 will receive animals selected according to seven different sort groups. The sort group to which a particular animal is assigned may be based on any one or more of several parameters but most likely will be based on their OED or DTF, their visual scores, their weights, their physical condition, or a combination thereof.

In the illustration of FIG. 18 there are seven sort groups. These are designated, "sort group 1," "sort group 2," "flex group," "earlies," "lates," "reruns," and "trash." Before the sorting procedure is over in step 6, these seven sort groups will be reduced to four, consisting of "sort group 1," "sort group 2," "earlies," and "lates." Each of those four groups will then be directed, in turn, according to step 8, into one of the four feed pens A, B, C or D according to their sort groups. Feed pens A-D in all likelihood will be the same feed pens as used in step 4.

To explain the sort groups further, "reruns" are cattle for which one or more measurements are missing or a process was omitted after a first pass through the single-file chute. As a result, cattle sorted into sort pen 1 as reruns will be run again through the single-file chute and there sorted into one of the other six groups, as indicated in step 7.

The "earlies" group consists of cattle that are predicted to have earlier OED's or DTF's than the rest of the cattle being sorted. In other words, they are predicted to have shipping dates to the packing plant considerably earlier than the cattle in the other groups. As indicated, cattle in the earlies group will be directed from sort pen 2 in step 6 to feed pen A in step 8. It should be noted that some of the reruns from sort pen 1, after being rerun, may end up in the earlies group of sort pen 2 and be eventually directed into feed pen A.

Sort pen 6, consisting of the "lates" group, include cattle that are predicted to have late shipping dates (DTF's or OED's), as compared to the other groups. As indicated in the diagram of FIG. 18, the lates group will be directed from sort pen 6 to feed pen D. The lates group may eventually include some of the reruns of sort pen 1 after the reruns are passed again through the single-file chute.

The "trash" group is composed of non-performing or poorly performing cattle and are sorted into sort pen 7. These are cattle that have poor ADG's or other physical problems, such as circulatory or respiratory damage, that render them unsuitable for beef production or that are unprofitable to keep in the feedlot. Cattle in the trash group are culled from the rest of the animals, removed from the feedlot and sold as salvage.

The three remaining groups are sort group 1, sort group 2 and the flex group. Whatever the parameters being used to sort, the flex group consists of animals that are close to the dividing line between sort group 1 and sort group 2. For example if sorting is by weight and sort group 1 consists of a range of lighter weight animals and sort group 2 a range of heavier weight animals, the flex group consists of animals that are somewhere in a weight range between the two principal sort groups.

For example, after a first pass through the single-file chute, sort group 1 might include 20 animals and sort group 2 might

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include 17 animals. The purpose of the flex group is to even out the number of animals in each of sort groups 1 and 2. In the given example, if there are 10 animals in the flex group, they would be resorted by sending them through the single-file chute again and redistributing them into either sort group 1 or sort group 2 according to weight. As a result of this resorting process with respect to the flex group, eventually there are no remaining animals in the flex group, as they have all been redistributed to either sort group 1 or sort group 2. In the given example, where sort group 1 originally includes 20 animals, sort group 2 17 animals and the flex group 10 animals, eventually sort group 1 may end up with 24 animals, sort group 2 with 23 animals and the flex group with none. When the flex group has been redistributed, the animals in sort groups 1 and 2 are directed respectively to feed pens B and C.

Flex sorting is a method of sorting a group of random animals into sort groups of predetermined size and quantity. The particular measurement that is used for ordering is of minor importance to the flex sorting method, but some examples are current weight, finish date, and finish weight. To achieve this sort, an ordered list of animals is maintained as the data is collected, a sort group is assigned based on the position within the ordered list. As the sorting starts, insufficient data will exist to make reasonable sort decisions, so animals are placed in a flex group until enough data has been collected to be representative of the whole population. This sample size is expressed as a percent of the total population, and is configurable. Other animals that will also be placed in the flex group are ones that are too close to the split between sort groups to be certain to which group they belong. This area of uncertainty is defined by flex percent value, it is also configurable and is expressed as a percent of the data range (i.e. maximum value-minimum value). At the completion of sorting, the animals in the flex group are processed again, this time since all information is known about the population the correct sort decision can be made.

Example

Setup parameters:

Total Population	5 head
Sort Distribution	2 groups
First Group	2 head (40% of total)
Second Group	3 head (60% of total)
Sample Size	30%
Flex Percent	10%

Sample weight data 625, 600, 675, 610, 640

1. First weight is 625, add to ordered list, compute new median, and the area of uncertainty.

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Since the number of weights (1) is less than sample size (1.5=*.3) put this weight in flex group.

Results			
	Sort Group 1	Sort Group 2	Flex Group
			625

10 2. Next weight is 600, add this weight to the ordered list, compute new median, and the area of uncertainty.

Results				
	Ordered List	Median Loc	Median Wt	Uncertainty
	600	((2 - 1)*0.4) + 1	AVG. (1 & 2)	(625 - 600)*0.1 +
	625	or between 1 & 2	or 612.5	or - 2.5

15 20 Since the number of weights (2) is greater than the sample size (1.5), check to see if new weight is in the area of uncertainty. The area of uncertainty is 610 to 615, the new weight is not in this area and is less than the median, so it belongs in sort group one.

Results			
	Sort Group 1	Sort Group 2	Flex Group
	600		625

25 30 3. Next weight is 675, add this weight to the ordered list, compute new median, and the area of uncertainty.

Results				
	Ordered List	Median Loc	Median Wt	Uncertainty
	600	((3 - 1)*0.4) + 1	AVG. (1 & 2)	(675 - 600)*0.1 +
	625	or between 1 & 2	or 612.5	or - 7.5

35 40 Since the number of weights (3) is greater than the sample size (1.5), check to see if new weight is in the area of uncertainty. The area of uncertainty is 605 to 620, the new weight is not in this area and is greater than the median, so it belongs in sort group two.

Results			
	Sort Group 1	Sort Group 2	Flex Group
	600	675	625

45 50 55 4. Next weight is 610, add this weight to the ordered list, compute list, compute new median, and the area of uncertainty.

Results				
	Ordered List	Median Loc	Median Wt	Uncertainty
	600	((4 - 1)*0.4) + 1	AVG. (2 & 3)	(675 - 600)*0.1 +
	610	or between 2 & 3	or 617.5	or - 7.5
	625			
	675			

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Since the number of weights (4) is greater than the sample size (1.5), check to see if new weight is in the area of uncertainty. The area of uncertainty is 610 to 625, the new weight is in this area and must be placed in the flex group.

Results		
Sort Group 1	Sort Group 2	Flex Group
600	675	625
		610

5. The last weight is 640, add this weight to the ordered list, compute new median, and the area of uncertainty.

5	Results			
	Ordered List	Median Loc	Median Wt	Uncertainty
	600	$((5 - 1)*0.4) + 1$	AVG. (2 & 3)	None
	610	or between 2 & 3	or 617.5	
	625			
	640			
	675			

10 Since there is no area of uncertainty and the current weight is less than the median, it belongs in group one.

Results			
Ordered List	Median Loc	Median Wt	Uncertainty
600	$((5 - 1)*0.4) + 1$	AVG. (2 & 3)	$(675 - 600)*0.1 +$
610	or between 2 & 3	or 617.5	or - 7.5
625			
640			
675			

15 Since the number of weights (5) is greater than the sample size (1.5), check to see if new weight is in the area of uncertainty. This area of uncertainty is 610 to 625, the new weight is not in this area and is greater than the median, so it belongs in sort group two.

20	Results		
	Sort Group 1	Sort Group 2	Flex Group
	600	675	
	610	640	
	625		

25 The above example demonstrates a two-way sort, but it can sort any number of ways. For an n-way sort there are $(n-1)$ median locations within the ordered list to keep track of, but only one flex pen is needed to hold the animals that we are uncertain about. Also, in the example given, the sort was done without any errors or animals in the wrong pen. It is possible for the sort to end up with a different head count in the sort group than expected, or for some head to be in the wrong pen based on their sorting measurement. These mistakes occur mostly at the splits between two sort groups, and involve animals with very close measurements. One thing that should be pointed out is that this sorting method, like a lot of other sorting methods, performs better if the data is random. The 30 worst possible scenario is for the data to already be sorted either ascending or descending.

35 One additional feature of this sorting method is the ability to have a human make subjective sort decisions, such as color, before running through the flex sort, in effect having two flex 40 sort sessions running concurrently.

With the animals in feed pens A, B, C and D for the second portion of the feeding period as indicated in step 8, they may remain in their respective pens until they are ready for shipment. During this second feeding period of typically 60-80 days, selected animals or selected groups of animals may again be remeasured and resorted through the single-file chute and sorting pens if desired or economically feasible. For example the timeline of FIG. 14 indicates two remeasurements and resorts during the feeding period. However FIG. 18 45 illustrates a single remeasuring and single uniformity sort more like the procedure outlined in FIG. 15A. All of the animals in feed pens A, D have new and more accurate pro rata feed intake ratios assigned to them using the method outlined in FIG. 39a and FIG. 39b, including data such as ADG, gain, external and internal measurements and other factors. Individual animal records are maintained for each animal during its remaining period of time in the feedlot. Additional weight checks or other measurements may be 50 used to monitor actual performance during this second portion of the feeding period to confirm or modify the OED or DTF of each animal.

Results		
Sort Group 1	Sort Group 2	Flex Group
600	675	625
	640	610

6. Now it is time to do the flex pen, the first weight of 625 is already in the ordered list so we only need to determine which group it belongs in.

Results			
Ordered List	Median Loc	Median Wt	Uncertainty
600	$((5 - 1)*0.4) + 1$	AVG. (2 & 3)	None
610	or between 2 & 3	or 617.5	
625			
640			
675			

55 Since there is no area of uncertainty and the current weight is greater than the median, it belongs in group two.

Results		
Sort Group 1	Sort Group 2	Flex Group
600	675	610
	640	
	625	

Also, as indicated in FIG. 15C, after a certain period within feed pens A-D, one or more of the groups may be sent to pen sorters such as pen sorter 94 in FIG. 13 for finish feeding for the time that these groups will be within their marketing window. This approach allows for "fine-tuning" of the optimum date of shipment for each individual animal based on market conditions and the individual animal's performance in its final days at the feedlot. This selection process, whether accomplished visually, by weight checks or by final feeding in a pen sorter, involves the selection process as indicated in step 8A for shipment of the animal to the packing plant. In the case of a pen sorter, this would involve sorting the animal selected for shipment from the feeding pen portion of the sorter to the shipping pen portion, as previously described.

Animals may be selected for shipment based on a selected marketing group of animals having the same average OED's or DTF's or on an individual animal basis, depending on how finely tuned the selection process desired. The selection process may be performed visually, by computer or by repeated weight checks as previously described.

Step 9 of the management system involves shipping the selected animals to the packing plant 156. At the packing plant, the animals are slaughtered for production of beef products for consumption. At the packing plant, the EID tag on each live animal is read and transferred by computer to match the identification on the resulting carcass so that the carcass data can be matched to the live animal performance and history data.

At the packing plant, the EID tags are removed from the animals and shipped in a container to a reconditioning operation where they are cleaned, tested and sorted for delivery back to the proper feedlot. The carcass data and the disbursements of funds breakdown for the original owners of the animals in a marketing group are transmitted to the appropriate feedlot. This data may also be transmitted to the original cattle producers for use in improving the genetics of the animals for future beef production.

The feed proration flow charts of FIGS. 38, 39a and 39b have been discussed. Following each table is an example calculation using the formulas and flow diagrams set forth in the figures. These examples set forth the data output from the computer when provided with software for carrying out the calculations set forth in FIGS. 38, 39a and 39b. The examples are for four animals identified as animals nos. 85, 10, 68 and 36. From the examples it will be seen that animal No. 85 had a starting weight of 829 pounds and a calculated optimum finish weight of 1136 pounds. During the initial feeding period P1 the ratio of feed allocated to it was 0.255646, so that out of a total of 780 pounds of feed fed during the first feeding period, 199.4038866 pounds of feed was prorated to it for allocating feed charges. During the next current period CP, the same ratio was used to prorate a total of 3,000 pounds of feed among the four animals, with 767 pounds being allocated to animal No. 85. However from the subsequent calculation, the DMI ratio for animal 85, based on remeasurements and original measurements, changed to 0.253206. As a result, animal 85 in the next feeding period ended up with 1,519 pounds of feed prorated to it out of a total of 6,000 pounds. It will also be noted from the calculations and data output from the computer that animal No. 85, when remeasured, had a weight of 1,028 pounds, up from an 829 pound initial weight. It also ended up with an actual weight of 1,128 pounds at final measurement compared to an original calculated optimum finish weight of 1,136 pounds.

When the four animals finally left the feedlot, their DMI numbers overall were recalculated to adjust their overall DMI ratios, resulting in a reallocation of the total feed fed to each

animal. Animal No. 85 had 2,440 pounds of feed allocated to it out of a total of 9,660 pounds, based on its recalculated overall feed ratio of 0.25262. The final data output from the feed proration calculations is a ratio of feed to weight gain for each animal. Animal No. 85 ended up with a feed to weight gain ratio of 8.17, second highest in the group of four animals considered.

FIG. 19 is a general block diagram of the data inputs and data outputs to the host computer system 78. There are two categories of inputs, including the group input category 194 and the individual animal input represented by interface 196. The individual prior history of each animal is entered upon each animal's arrival at the feedlot, as indicated by the prior history input 198. Such prior history would include each animal's date of birth and its genetic background. Also entered at initial processing and on subsequent remeasurements would be each animal's weight, hip height, backfat and hide condition as indicated at input 200. These measurements are obtained at the single-file chute in the manner previously described. These individual inputs in turn are transmitted by cable or radio frequency means to the host computer 78 for storage and use in calculating the previously discussed formulas. Group information when transmitted to the computer would include prior history data such as average daily gain while in the pasture and the group condition score, visually estimated at the time of arrival at the feedlot. Other information would include the sex, age, breed and hide thickness breakdown for the animals in the group. These "cattle factors" are also input into the computer through data entry means indicated at 204 and the group input interfaces 194.

Environmental factors such as air temperature, wind, and pen conditions where the animals came from are also collected and entered through data entry means 206 into the group input interface 194.

Management factors for each group including implants, ionophores and processing information, are collected and input through data entry means 208 into the computer through the group input interfaces 194. Finally, feed factors, such as ration composition, are input through data entry means 210 and the group input interfaces 194 into the host computer 78.

Market factors are also part of the data used to calculate the desired computer outputs, such factors including purchase price, cattle futures, basis and premium/discounts for the animals in the group. These market factors are entered through data entry means 12 and the group input interface 194 into the host computer 78.

With the data collected as described, and the appropriate software, the computer system is able to calculate, using formulas such as the ones disclosed in FIGS. 36, 37, 38, 39a, 39b, and Table 1, such outputs as a projected date to finish (DTF), optimum end weight (OEW), and projected end points such as finish weight, hot carcass weight, yield grade, and USDA quality grade. The computer system also calculates a return on investment including cost, incomes and profit as indicated at 218.

Examples of the type of data collected, calculated, stored and available in reports generated by the computer system are shown in Tables 3A. 3G.

Table 3A, the cattle received report by load, has already been discussed. It discloses the information available from the producer and entered into the computer through appropriate data entry means upon the arrival of a load of cattle at the feedlot. This is a "group" report and is the sort of information entered into the computer as indicated at data entry means 202, 204 and 206 of FIG. 19.

Table 3B is a pen assignment summary report, which is another group type report and gives the sorting pen assign-

ments 1-7 for lot No. 495 of cattle that is to be fed in pens **59**, **57** and **58**. The number of head of cattle in each pen **10**, **11** and **11** for sorting pens 1, 2 and 4 and feed pens **59**, **57** and **58** is given. This information is available from the computer after at least one measurement and sort of a lot of animals.

Still referring to Table 3B, the remaining data in the pen assignment summary report should be self-explanatory, giving information concerning the projected finish weight, the current weight, the frame size and current backfat measurements, on average, for the animals in feed pens **59**, **57** and **58**. In addition to the averages for each of the indicated measurements, the pen assignment summary report also gives maximum and minimum ranges for the animals in each sort group.

Table 3C is a sample of a pen assignment detail report generated by the computer system. This report indicates the lot number, the feed pen number, the sort pen number, and the EID tag number of each of the 11 animals in feed pen **57**. The report also indicates that the animals in this feed pen have a shipping window ranging from May 14, 1994 to Sep. 28, 1994, indicating that the animals in this group are expected to reach their optimum condition, such as optimum finish weight, sometime within this window. The pen assignment detail report also gives individual animal measurements and calculations including video image dimensions (VID), and projected days to finish (DTF) which is the number of days the animal is projected to require to reach its optimum finish weight. Also indicated is the projected optimum finish weight (OFW), the animal's current weight (CWT), and each animal's average daily gain (ADG). Finally, the pen assignment detail report gives each animal's frame measurement score (FM) and backfat measurement (BF).

Because of the amount of information available for each animal in each feed pen in the feedlot, and at any time during the animal's stay in the feedlot, it will be readily appreciated how animals can be selected, on an individual basis if desired, for shipment to the packing plant when each animal is in optimum condition for shipment. Simply by taking repeated measurements of each animal as it nears its projected shipping date or optimum finish weight, animals can be selected for shipment and slaughter based on their individual performances and market factors rather than the performances of any particular group, if desired.

Table 3D and Table 3E are marketing yard sheets that the computer system can generate for each animal in the feedlot. The marketing yard sheet of Table 3D is for the same group of animals as the marketing yard sheet of Table 3E. However the yard sheet of Table 3D gives individual animal data for lot No. 495 of animals on the measurement date of Mar. 30, 1994, while Table 3E gives the data for the same animals in lot No. 495 approximately three weeks later, on Apr. 22, 1994.

As will be seen by the columns in the marketing yard sheets, each animal is identified by tag number, pen number and lot number. Additional data available in the other columns of both marketing yard sheets include various projections that have been calculated for each animal, a comparison of purchase weight and current weight for each animal, days on feed (DOF) information for each animal, the ration information that applies to each animal, average daily gain (ADG) information for each animal and feed intake information for each animal. Finally, the projected and actual cost information based on various treatments, processing and other factors for each animal is listed.

Table 3F is a sample of a pen closeout report generated by the computer system as a result of the various inputs, including measurement inputs for each animal and each group of animals. This gives the income and expense information for a pen of animals, broken down to an average cost per head,

including feed charges, cattle insurance, yardage fees and processing fees. Other pen information included in the pen closeout report includes such information as total pounds gained by all animals in the pen, broken down to an average gain per head. Also included are average daily gain for each animal, daily feed costs per head, daily total costs per head, total pounds of feed fed for the pen and total pounds per head. Also included is average daily consumption data. Other information includes the cost of the feed fed.

In the summary at the bottom of the pen closeout report, the profit or loss from the pen is given. In the sample, there was no profit for the indicated pen, which included 10 heifers. Based on the summary, the 10 heifers in the pen had an average incoming weight of 678 pounds and an average outgoing weight of 787 pounds. Each gained an average of 3.21 pounds per day for a total of 34 days on feed. The cost of the gain was \$56.21.

The final sample report is shown in Table 3G which is a Closeout Summary By Lot report. In this case the lot number is 42894, which was included in pen **553**, containing a total of 27 head. The total profit for the lot was \$4,957.98. Each animal in the report is identified by its visual identification tag number (VID) and the profit from each animal is calculated. In addition, each animal's performance during its stay in the feedlot is calculated. Each animal is listed under its sire and dam. This sort of information is valuable to the cattle producer in determining which sires and dams produce the most profitable offspring. This information is then used in making future breeding decisions.

A layout of the computer system is shown in FIG. 17. Several different computers are used in the system. First there is a feedlot business systems (FBS) computer **230** located at the feedlot office **232**. This computer stores the databases used in the system and performs most of the calculations needed in operating the system.

Remote from the FBS computer and closer to the chute area **22** are a separate process control computer **234** and an ultrasound computer **236** within a common control cabinet **238**. Separate from the control cabinet and the other computers is a video computer **240**.

Basically, the process control computer **234** controls the operation of all subsystems including the stall and sorting gates, weigh scale, ultrasound computer and the video computer. The process control computer communicates with the FBS computer through the modems **241**, **242**, line **244** and FBS interface **246**. The ultrasound computer **236** communicates with the process control computer **234** through a line **248**. The ultrasound computer **240** also has an output line **250** to a backfat monitor **252** and an input line **254** from the ultrasound scanner **256** at the single-file chute stall **40**.

The video computer **240** communicates with the process control computer **234** through a commline **258**. It also has an output line **260** to a video monitor **262**, and input lines **264**, **266** to video cameras, including an overhead camera **268** and a side-view camera **270**.

Each animal is weighed by a scale loadcell **272** at the weigh stall **38**. The loadcell communicates with the scale **274** through a line **276**. The scale in turn communicates with the process control computer through a line **278** and data split **280**. Data from the data split also can be communicated via line **282** and a modem **284** and line **286** directly to the FBS computer **230** through the FBS interface **246**.

Data concerning drugs, other animal health treatments and other information about an individual animal at the processing station or stall **42** can be entered into an animal health computer or monitor **288** at the processing station and from

there communicated directly through the modem 290 and line 292 and interface 246 to the FBS computer.

As previously noted, each animal has an EID tag applied to it in the single-file chute to give each animal a unique electronic identification. This identification is transmitted from the EID tag by a probe antenna 294 at the EID/USBF stall 40 through a line 296 from the chute to a tiris relay 298 and from the relay through a line 300 to a tiris EID reader 302. The tiris reader 302 transmits the animal's EID identification through a line 304 to the process control computer 234. Alternatively, each animal's EID tag signal can be received by a hanging antenna 306 at the single-file chute and transmitted via line 308 to the tiris relay 298 and thence through line 300 to the tiris reader 302 and through the line 304 to the process control computer 234.

The FBS computer not only collects data and uses it to calculate projections, costs and other information used in the management method and system, it also collects data from other sources not shown. For example, the FBS computer performs the regular feedlot accounting functions and generates financial reports. It may also receive and store data from a computerized animal drug inventory control and animal health history and drug treatment system as disclosed in the previously mentioned U.S. Pat. No. 5,315,505. The FBS computer may also collect and store data from a computerized feed additive delivery system such as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,733,971 and the related patents previously mentioned. The FBS computer may also receive and store data concerning the amount of feed ration delivered to each of the feed pens in a feedlot, including such data collected from a computerized bunk reader system such as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,008,821. All such information, including the drug usage information, feed ration usage information, and feed additive usage information can be used together with the data concerning each animal collected from the system and other data that may be collected and stored in the FBS computer database to prorate feed ration and feed additive costs to individual animals and thereby calculate the cost of production value and other pertinent information about each animal in the feedlot according to various formulas, a few of which are disclosed as examples and discussed.

Tables 4A, 4E are sample pages of prompts that are generated by the computer programs that are used in the computer system 78 that operates the described system. The described management system is known as the electronic cattle management system (ECM) which is the computer symbol used to initiate the program. The ECM program includes four session types, one of which is entered to begin the system's operation. In Table 4B it will be seen that certain animal measurements can be keyed in, automatically entered or not recorded.

Item 7 in Table 4B gives the prompts for entering the type of sorting that is desired such as, for example, a flex sort as previously described.

At the top of Table 4C, the prompts for entering the number of animals to be sorted into the various sort pens are indicated.

Table 4D lists the various prompts for processing each animal at the single-file chute. By entering the proper prompt, the computer can be instructed to process the identified animal in a particular way such as by weight, by reading its EID, by ultrasound measurement and/or by taking external video measurements.

Additional prompts for setting the parameters for measuring and sorting are given in Table 4E and 4F.

The electronic cattle management system can use a number of different computer programs to run the system as described, the operation and sequencing of which are all

controlled by the previously described process control computer 234 shown in FIG. 17. These programs will now be described with reference to their respective flow charts.

First, control of the operation of the entrance and exit gates at the various stalls or stations in the single file chute will be described. First with reference to FIG. 20A, the get-ready station 34 in the single-file chute includes the entrance or tail gate 46 and the exit or head gate 48 defining the stall. Within the stall are three sensors including a tail sensor 342, a fill sensor 344 and a head sensor 346. These sensors, which may be photoelectric sensors or some other automatic sensors, detect the presence of an animal within the stall space, and when all three sensors detect the presence of an animal, the animal will be contained within the space, whereupon the tail gate 46 can be closed after being opened initially to allow entrance of the animal into the stall space. FIG. 20A also indicates the direction of travel of the animal through the single-file chute and the stall space as indicated by the arrow 316.

Referring now to FIG. 20B, the computer program for controlling the operation of the tail and head gates 46, 48 is disclosed. This computer program resides in the process control computer 234 of FIG. 17. Although not shown, obviously the sensors associated with the get ready stall and all other stations in the single-file chute and the sort pens, to be described, are in communication with the process control computer.

First the program is conditioned by another program to be described to get ready to receive the next animal that will proceed through the single file chute, as indicated at step 318. At this point, if the fill sensor is off as indicated at 320, the program assumes that the get ready stall is empty and so commands that the head gate be closed as indicated at step 322. Then the program commands opening of the tail gate 324 to allow the next animal to enter the get ready stall. After the tail gate opens, the program waits until the fill sensor at 326 detects the presence of an animal in the stall. The program then proceeds to the next step to detect when the tail sensor is turned off, at step 328. When this occurs, the program commands closing of the tail gate at step 330. If at step 326 the fill sensor does not detect the presence of an animal, the tail gate will not close. Also, as indicated at 328, if the tail sensor remains on, the tail gate will not close. Only when the fill sensor is on and the tail sensor is off can the tail gate close.

After the tail gate closes, the program inquires at step 322 whether the next station, namely the video station 86, is ready for the next animal. At this point nothing happens until the processing computer receives an indication that the video station is ready for the next animal. When this occurs, the program, as step 334, signals the video computer 240 to get ready for the next animal. At this point the head gate 48 is opened as indicated at 336. The program then inquires at step 338 as to whether the fill sensor 312 in the get ready stall is off and at step 340 whether the head sensor is off. When both the fill sensor 312 and the head sensor 314 are off, indicating that an animal has left the get ready stall and entered the video stall, the program commands the head gate 48 to reclose as indicated at step 322, and then commands the tail gate at step 324 to reopen to ready the stall for the next animal.

Referring to FIG. 21A, after the animal leaves the get ready stall 34 it walks through the video stall 36 where it is scanned for external dimensions, and proceeds, without stopping, through the open tail gate 50 directly into the EID/scale stall 38 where the animal is weighed and an EID tag is applied to the animal if necessary and read to identify it. Because of the continuous movement of the animal through the video stall, there are no tail, fill or head sensors in that stall. However the

subsequent EID/scale stall requires the animal to stop while it is weighed. Thus, both the tail gate 50 and the head gate 52 must be closed while the animal is contained within the EID/scale stall, identified and weighed. Thus such stall includes a tail sensor 342, a fill sensor 344 and a head sensor 346, all of which communicate with the process control computer. Again, the direction of travel of the animal is indicated by the arrow 316.

Referring to FIG. 21B, the computer program for operating the tail gate 50 and head gate 52 at the EID/scale station is disclosed. As an animal proceeds through the video stall 36, tail gate 50 will be open if the EID/scale station is ready for the next animal, which will be determined by whether or not the head gate of such station is closed and its fill sensor and head sensors 344, 346 are off. At this point, the EID/scale station computer program 348 is initialized and ready to start its sequence of operation. First, at step 350, the program inquires whether the fill sensor 344 is off. If so, it commands the head gate 52 to close at step 352. Thereafter, at step 354 the tail gate 50 is commanded to open, allowing the next animal to enter the EID/scale stall. Next the program, at step 356, inquires whether the fill sensor is on. If so, it inquires at step 358 whether the tail sensor is off. If so, at step 360, the program commands the tail gate 50 to reclose, whereupon the animal is ready to be weighed and have its EID tag attached if necessary, and read.

With the animal in the EID/scale stall, the program inquires at step 362 whether an EID identification of the animal is required. If so, the process control computer 234 is commanded to attempt to read the tiris EID reader 302 at step 364. If no EID is required, the program next inquires whether a weight is required at step 366. If so, the process control computer at step 368 is commanded to read the animal's weight from the scale 274. After this, or if no weight is required, the program will inquire at step 370 whether a hip-height measurement of the animal is required. If so, the process control computer is commanded at step 372 to read and record the video measurements communicated from the video computer 240. After the measurements are recorded, if required, the program inquires at step 374 whether measurements are complete. If not, the program will return to step 362 and again proceed through the program to attempt to read the video measurements. Once the measurements have been recorded, the program proceeds at step 376 to inquire whether the next station, namely the ultrasound station 40, is ready for the next animal. Unless the next station is ready for the animal, the head gate 52 will not open. When the next station signals that it is ready, through the process control computer, the head gate 52 is commanded to open at step 378. Next, the program inquires whether the fill sensor 344 is off, at step 380. If not, the program will not proceed to the next step and reclose the head gate. When the fill sensor is off, the program inquires whether the head sensor is off. If the head sensor is off, indicating that the animal has left the EID/scale stall, the program commands the process control computer to reclose the head gate 52. At this point the weighed and identified animal will have entered the ultrasound stall 40, and the program returns to step 352 to command reclosing the head gate in preparation for the next animal.

Referring to FIG. 20A, the ultrasound station 40 is disclosed as having a tail sensor 384, a fill sensor 386 and a head sensor 388. It also includes the tail gate 52, which is the same gate 52 that serves as the head gate for the preceding EID/scale stall 38. It also includes the head gate 54 which serves as the tail gate for the next processing stall 42. Again, the direction of travel of the animal through the ultrasound station and through the single-file chute is indicated by the arrow 316.

Referring now to FIG. 22B, the computer program for controlling the operation of the gates and thus the animal within the ultrasound station is indicated at 390. Once initiated, it first inquires at step 392 whether the fill sensor 386 is off. If not, because the preceding animal has not yet left the station, the program will return to determine whether the animal has not yet completed its ultrasound scan. However, assuming that the preceding animal has left the ultrasound station and the head gate 54 is closed, the program commands at step 394 that the head gate be cracked open. Then at step 396 the program commands the processing computer to open the tail gate. When the tail gate is opened, the program inquires whether the fill sensor is on, at step 398. If so, indicating that the next animal has entered the ultrasound station, the program inquires whether the tail sensor is off, at step 400. When the tail sensor goes off, the computer program instructs the computer to close the tail gate, at step 402, whereupon the next animal is fully within the ultrasound station and ready to be prepared for measurement. Once the tail gate is closed, the program inquires at step 404 whether the head catcher is to be employed to stabilize the animal in the station. If it is, the program inquires whether the head sensor is on at step 406. If it is, the program, at step 408, commands closing of the head gate.

Once the head gate is closed, the program at step 410 inquires whether the animal is to be "squeezed" within the station. This has reference to the device at the station commonly referred to as a "squeeze gate," which in effect squeezes the animal from behind into tight confinement within the stall so that it cannot move to any appreciable extent. If the answer is yes, the squeeze gate at 412 is commanded to close at step 412. If the answer is no, the squeeze gate is not actuated. In either case, the next programming sequence is an inquiry as to whether the animal's backfat is to be measured, at step 414. If the answer is yes, the program will attempt to take a reading from the ultrasound computer at step 416 to record the backfat measurement. If the answer is no, the program inquires whether all measurements are completed at step 418. This is also the next step after a backfat ultrasound reading is attempted at step 416. If the answer is no, the program will again attempt to take a backfat measurement. If the answer is yes, the program inquires whether the next station in the chute is ready for the animal, at step 420. If not, nothing further happens until the next station is ready for the animal. When that occurs, the head gate 54 is commanded to open at step 422. When the head gate is open, the program inquires at step 426 whether the fill sensor is off. If not, nothing further happens until the fill sensor is off. When that occurs, the program inquires at step 426 whether the head sensor is off. If not, nothing further happens until the head sensor is off. When that occurs, the program returns to step 394 to cause the head gate to crack, ready for the next animal.

Referring to FIG. 23A, the animal proceeds from the ultrasound station 40 into the processing station 42 through the head gate 54 of the ultrasound station, which becomes the tail gate 54 of the processing station. Within the processing station are three sensors, a tail sensor 428, a fill sensor 430 and a head sensor 432.

Referring to FIG. 23B, the computer program for the processing station, indicated at 434, first inquires whether the fill sensor 430 is off, at step 436. If not, the head gate 56 will not close until the fill sensor does indicate that the preceding animal has left the processing station. When the fill sensor is off, head gate 56 is commanded to close at step 438 and the tail gate 54 is commanded to open at step 440 to admit the next animal into the processing station.

Next, the program inquires whether the fill sensor is on at step 442. If not, nothing further happens until the fill sensor is on. When that occurs, the program inquires whether the tail sensor 428 is off, at step 444. If the tail sensor is not off, the tail gate 54 will not close. When the tail sensor is off, indicating that the animal is completely within the processing station, the tail gate 54 is commanded to close at step 446. When the tail gate is closed the program, at step 448, inquires whether there is to be a head catch. If the answer is yes, the program inquires at step 450 whether the head sensor 432 is on. If not, nothing further happens until the head sensor is on. If the answer is yes, the head gate 56 is closed at 452 to catch the animal's head.

Next, the program inquires whether the animal is to be squeezed by the squeeze gate within the processing station, at step 454. If not, the program proceeds to the next processing sequence. If the answer is yes, the squeeze gate at the processing station is commanded to close at step 456 to confine the animal within the station. After the squeeze gate is closed, the program proceeds to the next processing sequence.

The next inquiry, at step 458, is whether the animal needs to be identified by its EID. If the answer is yes, the program instructs the process control computer at step 460 to attempt to read an identification from the tiris. Nothing further happens until the animal is identified. When the animal has been identified or if no identification is needed, the program inquires whether a sort pen for the animal is required, at step 462. If not, a status light on a control panel (not shown) at the processing station is commanded to indicate, at step 464, that the animal is ready to be released from the single-file chute.

If a sort pen is required, the program at step 466 inquires whether the animal data has been sent to the FBS computer. If the answer is no, the data is sent to the FBS computer, at step 468. If the animal data has already been sent to the FBS computer, the program bypasses step 468 and attempts to read the correct sort pen for the animal as determined by the FBS computer at step 470. The program then returns to the sort pen required inquiry step 462. If a sort pen is still required then the just described steps are repeated. If a sort pen identity is not required, then the program proceeds on through the sequence and the ready to release status light is illuminated on the aforementioned control panel.

Thereafter, an operator must manually press a release button to release an animal from the single-file chute into the alley between the sort pens. At this point the computer inquires whether the release button has been pushed, at step 472. If the answer is no, nothing further happens until the release button is pushed. When the release button has been pushed, the program inquires whether the sort pen is ready, at step 474. If not, nothing further happens until either the release button is pushed or the sort pen is ready. When the sort pen is ready, head gate 56 is commanded to open, at step 476. When the head gate is open, the program inquires whether the fill sensor is off, at step 478. If not, nothing further happens until the fill sensor is off. When it is off, the program next inquires whether the head sensor is off, at step 480. If not, nothing further happens until the head sensor is off. When it is off, the program returns to step 438 to close the head gate and prepare the stall for the next animal.

Referring now to FIG. 24A, the seven sort pens 62 and their respective sorting pen entrance gates 62 are illustrated schematically. The direction of travel of the animals through the alley 60 between the two rows of sorting pens is indicated by the arrow 316 as they leave the single-file chute indicated generally at 22.

FIG. 24B is a flow diagram of the computer program 482 for operating the sort pen entrance gates 62. The first step in

the programming sequence is to make sure all sort pen gates are closed at step 484. Next, the program at step 486 inquires of the process control computer whether a sort pen is requested. If not, nothing further happens and the sort pen gates remain closed, and each animal would travel through the alley 60 to an appropriate feed pen through the open gate 62 of feed pen 7 as indicated in FIG. 24A.

If a sort pen is requested, the designated sort pen is commanded to open at 488. When the sort pen gate is open the program inquires whether the sort pen gate sensor (not shown) has been tripped, at step 490. When the sort pen gate sensor is tripped, it would indicate that an animal has entered the sort pen through the open gate. The sort pen sensor, such as a photocell, would be located at the gate entrance so that its beam would be interrupted when an animal passes through the entrance into the pen with the gate open. After the sort pen sensor has been tripped, there is a five second delay, indicated at step 492, to give the animal time to pass through the open gate into the designated pen. Thereafter, the entrance gate is commanded to close again, as indicated at step 494. When the designated sort pen gate is closed, the program returns to step 486 to inquire if a sort pen is requested for the next animal. Nothing further happens until a sort pen is again requested.

FIG. 25 is a flow diagram for the computer program in the process control computer that operates in conjunction with the measuring and processing station and sort pen operating programs to control the sequence of operation of the various station head and tail gates and sort pen entrance gates. The FIG. 25 program, indicated generally at 496, is for controlling the movement of a single animal through the single-file chute and its measuring and processing stations and into one of the selected sort pens. The processing sequence program 496 starts at step 498 by closing the GR1 stall head gate and opening the GR1 stall tail gate. Then at step 500 it asks whether there is an animal in the GR1 stall. If not, nothing further happens until an animal enters the GR1 stall.

When there is an animal in the stall as indicated by the fill and tail sensors in the stall, the GR1 tail gate is closed at step 502. Then the program asks if the video and scale/EID stations are ready for an animal, at step 504. If not, nothing further happens until those stalls are empty and ready for the next animal. When they are, the GR1 head gate opens at 506. Then, at step 508, when the sensors in the GR1 stall indicate that the stall is empty, the GR1 head gate closes at step 510. As the animal passes from the GR1 stall through the video stall the video measurements are made under control of the video computer, as indicated at step 512.

The animal passes from the video stall into the scale/EID station or stall as indicated at step 514. When the sensors in the scale/EID station indicate that an animal is in the station, the scale/EID tail gate is closed at step 516. Thereafter, the animal is weighed in the scale/EID station as indicated at 518. Next, there is an attempt to read the animal's EID identification at step 520. Thereafter, the program inquires whether the ultrasound station is ready for the animal at step 522. If not, nothing further happens until the ultrasound station is ready. When ready, the head gate of the scale/EID station is opened at step 524 so the animal can pass into the ultrasound station. Next, the program asks at step 526 whether the animal is gone from the scale/EID station. If not, nothing further happens until the program is told that the animal has left the station. When the animal is gone from the scale/EID station the scale/EID head gate is closed at step 528.

Next, the program asks at step 530 whether there is an animal in the ultrasound station. If not, nothing further happens until an animal is detected in the ultrasound station. Then the ultrasound tail gate is closed at step 532. Thereafter,

the ultrasound computer operates the ultrasound machine to make the backfat measurements at step 534, and the process control computer is commanded to read the video measurements at step 536 by the processing station program.

Next, the processing station program asks whether the processing station is ready for the animal, at step 538. If not, nothing further happens until the processing station has cleared the previous animal and is ready for the next animal. Then, the ultrasound head gate is opened at step 540, allowing the animal to proceed into the processing station. Thereafter, the program asks whether the animal is gone from the ultrasound station, as indicated at step 542. If not, nothing further happens until the animal has cleared the ultrasound station. Thereafter, the ultrasound station head gate is closed at step 544.

Next, the program asks whether the animal has entered the processing station at step 544. If not, nothing further happens until the animal is fully within the processing station, after which the processing station tail gate is closed at step 546. After the animal is within the processing station, its EID identification is read at step 548, its measurement data from the previous measuring stations is transmitted to the FBS computer at step 550, and the FBS computer transmits to the process control computer the assigned sort pen for the animal at step 552.

At this point, within the processing station, the animal may be implanted with growth promotants or undergo additional treatment that may be indicated. When this processing is completed, a button is manually pushed by an operator to indicate that the animal is ready to leave the processing station. The computer program then asks whether the release button has been pushed at step 554 and if not, nothing further happens and the animal cannot leave the processing station. When the release button has been pushed, the program inquires whether the assigned sort pen is ready for the animal, at step 556. Until the designated sort pen is ready, nothing further happens and the animal remains in the processing station. When the sort pen is ready, the processing station head gate is opened at step 558 and the specified sort pen gate is also opened at step 560, so the animal can leave the processing station and proceed into the sort gate alley and into the open sort pen.

Next, the computer program asks whether the animal has left the processing station at step 562. If so, the head gate of the processing station is closed at step 564. Next, the program asks whether the sort pen sensor has been tripped by the animal entering through the sort pen gate, at step 566. If so, the designated sort pen gate is closed at step 568. Finally, the identification of the animal entering the sort pen is recorded at step 570 and the processing sequence program ends for that particular animal at step 572.

FIG. 26 is the overall ECM process control program in the process control computer that controls identification and shutdown of the various equipment used in the system including the sort pen gate sensors, the measuring and processing station sensors, the station gate actuators, the tiris EID reader, the ultrasound computer, the video measurement computer, the FBS computer interface and the like. The program is indicated generally at 574.

First, the particular configuration of the feedlot management system being used is loaded into the computer at step 576, and thereafter the various computers, interfaces, actuators, sensors, sort pen gates, and the like are initialized at step 578. Next, the various parameters to be used in the system are entered at step 580 through a data entry means. Next, the program checks for user inputs at step 582, and inquires whether any stopping of the operation of the system has been

requested at step 584. If a stop has been requested, the system waits for the gates to settle at step 586 and then shuts down the equipment under its control at step 588 to end the ECM process control program at step 590.

If no stop of the system has been requested, then the program updates the sensors at step 592, updates the gates at 594 and updates the measurement and processing stations at step 596. Thereafter, the program returns to the portion of the program at step 582 that checks for user inputs and the program then continues to operate for the next animal proceeding through the system.

FIG. 27 is the station initialization program 598 that conditions each measuring and processing station for the receipt of the next animal. Each station is initialized at step 600, and when completed for all stations, the station initialization program ends at step 602. To initialize each station or pen, the program inquires whether the fill sensor in that station is on, at step 604. If the fill sensor is on, the program inquires whether this is a sort pen at step 606. If not, the program then assumes that the head gate is closed and that the tail gate is closed for that particular station at step 608, and then the program returns to its start at step 600 and repeats the sequence for each of (n) stations or pens. If at any station the program detects that a fill sensor is not on, at step 604 the program proceeds to a station setup step 610 and then back to the start of the programming sequence at step 600. If at step 606 of the programming sequence the program detects that this is a sort pen being initialized, then the program proceeds to the station setup step 610 before proceeding back to the start of the programming sequence at step 600.

FIG. 28 is the flow chart for the "update stations" program 612. The first step in the program sequence is to update each station for the next animal as indicated at step 614. When each station of the total number of stations (n) has been updated, the update program for that station ends at step 616. The program resequences until all stations have been updated.

To update a station, the next step 616 of the program asks a station whether it is waiting for an animal. If it is, then it initiates the capture animal program at step 618, which will be described subsequently. After the capture animal program for a particular station has been run, the program sequences back to its start at step 614 and then proceeds to update the next station. If a particular station at sequencing step 616 of the program is not waiting for an animal, the program then asks whether an animal has been captured at step 620. If an animal has not been captured, it then asks at step 622 whether an animal has been released from the station. If an animal has been released, the program resequences to the beginning at step 614 to rerun the program for the next station. If for a particular station an animal is captured when the inquiry is made at step 620, the program next asks at step 624 whether the measurements are complete at that station. If the measurements are not complete, the program waits until the measurements are made at step 626.

Next, the program asks if the measurements have been completed at step 628 and if the answer is yes a light on the control panel is turned on at step 630 to indicate that the measurements are complete, and the program sequences back to the beginning at step 614. If the measurements are not complete, the program sequences back to the beginning and reruns until the measurements are complete and the "complete light" can be turned on.

If, at step 624 when the program inquires whether the measurements are complete and the answer is yes, the program then asks at step 632 whether the animal is ready for release. If the answer is no, the program sequences to the beginning and reruns through the sequences until the animal

is ready for release. When the animal is ready for release at step 632 of the program, it then asks at step 634 whether the release button has been pushed. If it has, then the animal is released at step 636. If it has not, then the program sequences back to the beginning to rerun until the animal is released. If at step 622 of the program an animal has not been released, then the program commands that the animal be released at step 638 after which the program sequences back to the beginning to update the station for the next animal.

FIG. 29 shows the flow chart for the "station setup" computer program 640. In the first step of the programming sequence the program asks whether this is a sort pen. If it is a sort pen, the sort pen entrance gate (indicated in the flow chart as the "tail gate" at step 644 is closed to end the station setup program for the sort pen.

If the station setup program is not being run for a sort pen, then the program commands that the squeeze gate, if any, be opened at 646. Next, the program inquires at step 648 whether the station has a crack sensor. If it does, then the program commands that the head gate be cracked at step 650. Then the program commands that the tail gate be opened at step 652 to end the setup program for that particular station.

If at the sequencing step 648 the station does not have a crack sensor, then the program commands that the station head gate be closed at step 654 and then that the tail gate be opened at step 652 to end the station setup program, at which point the station is ready to receive the next animal.

FIG. 30 is the flow chart for the "capture animal" program for each station, which, like the preceding programs, is run by the process control computer. The program, indicated at 656, first inquires whether the tail gate for a station is open at step 658. If the tail gate is not open, it inquires whether the fill sensor at the station is on at step 660. If the fill sensor is not on the program sequences to a point where it asks whether the head and tail gates are closed at step 662. If the head and tail gates are not closed, the program sequences to its end at step 664 because there is no animal present to be captured.

Returning to step 660 of the programming sequence, if the fill sensor is on, the program then inquires whether the tail sensor is on at step 666. If the tail sensor is on the program then sequences to step 662 to inquire whether the head and tail gates are closed. If the head and tail gates are closed, the programs inquires whether this is a sort pen at step 668. If it is not a sort pen, the program commands that the status light on the control panel be turned on to indicate that the measuring or processing at the station is not complete, at step 670. If at step 668 it is a sort pen, then the program commands that the animal's identity be recorded at step 672.

Returning to step 666, if the tail sensor is not on but the fill sensor is on, then the program commands that the tail gate be closed at step 674. Once the tail gate is closed, the program at step 676 inquires whether there is a head catcher at the station and if so whether the head is to be caught by it.

If the station has no head catcher, then the program at step 678 inquires whether the head sensor is off. If it is not off, nothing further happens until it does go off. Then the program commands the head gate to close at step 680. When the head gate closes the program inquires whether the station has a squeeze gate and if so whether the animal is to be squeezed, at step 682. If the animal is to be squeezed, the squeeze gate is commanded to close at step 684. After the squeeze gate is closed, the program sequences through the steps previously described at 662, 668, and 672 to the end of the capture program at 664.

If at step 676 there is an indication that there is a head catcher to be operated, the program inquires at step 686 whether the head sensor is on. If it is on then the head gate is

commanded to close at step 688, and the program sequences through steps 682, 684, 662, 668 and 672 as previously described.

If at step 686, the head sensor is not on, then the program sequences to step 662 to inquire whether the head and tail gates are closed.

The next program to be described is the "make measurements" program, the flow diagram for which is shown in FIG. 31 and indicated generally at 690. This is the program of the process control computer that controls the operation of the computers that control the equipment for making the three basic measurements, namely a weight measurement, an external measurement via the video scanner, and an ultrasound measurement for backfat via the ultrasound machine. The program also controls the reading of the measurement data and its transmission to the FBS computer.

The first step 692 in the program is to inquire whether an animal needs to be identified through its EID tag, by asking whether there is a tiris reader. If there is a tiris reader the program inquires whether an electronic ID of the animal is still needed at step 694. If an electronic identification is needed, the program inquires whether an identity reading is ready at step 696. If the reading is ready, the program instructs the computer to read the animal's electronic identification at step 698. If at any step in the foregoing sequence, it is indicated that no electronic ID is needed or that the reading is not ready, the program proceeds to the next sequence of steps.

The sequence involves weighing, and the first step in the sequence is to inquire whether there is a scale at the station. If there is a scale at the station, the program inquires at step 708 whether a weight is required. If a weight is required the program asks if the scale reading is available at step 710. If the scale reading is available, the program instructs the computer to read the scale weight at step 712. If at any point in the foregoing weigh sequence it is indicated that a weight is not required or a weight reading is not available, the program sequences to the next series of steps for backfat measurement. The backfat steps start with an inquiry at step 708 whether there is an ultrasound machine at the station. If there is, the program inquires whether a backfat measurement is required at step 710. If a backfat measurement is required, the program commands the appropriate computer to read the ultrasound data at step 712. If a backfat measurement is not available or needed, or once the ultrasound data has been read, the program sequences to the next series of steps relating to video measurements.

The first inquiry at the next sequence of steps as indicated at step 714 is whether there is a video measurement interface at the particular station. If there is, the program inquires whether a hip-height measurement is still required at step 716. If it is, the program inquires whether the video measurements are ready to be read at step 718. If they are, a reading of the video measurements of the animal is made at step 720, and the program sequences to the next series of steps beginning at step 722. If at any point in the video measurement sequence of steps it is indicated that a measurement is not required or that the video measurements are not available to be read, the program sequences to the next series of steps.

At step 722 the program inquires whether there is an FBS computer interface at the station. If there is, the program inquires whether a sort pen is required at step 724. If one is required, the program inquires whether all measurements are completed at step 726. If all measurements are completed, then the program transmits the recorded measurement data to the FBS computer. It also requests the FBS computer to assign a sort pen to the animal at step 728. If at any point in the foregoing sequence of steps, beginning at step 722, there is no sort pen required or all measurements are not complete, the program proceeds to the end at step 730.

From the foregoing description of the "make measurements" program it will be apparent that this program can be used to control the appropriate computer and equipment at each measurement station to make the appropriate measurements, then record them and transmit the measurement data to the FBS computer, and in turn receive a sort pen assignment from the FBS computer based on such measurement data.

The next program to be described is the "release animal" program, the flow diagram of which is shown in FIG. 32 and indicated generally at 732.

The first step in the release animal programming sequence, at step 734, is to inquire whether there is an animal at the particular station. If there is no animal, the program sequences to command the head gate to open and the squeeze gate to open at step 736. Then the program sequences to inquire whether the fill sensor is off at step 738. If the fill sensor is not off, the program sequences to the end of the station release program at step 740 and the animal is not released.

If the fill sensor is off at step 738 then the program inquires whether the head sensor is off at step 742. If the head sensor is off, then the program commands the station setup program to start at step 744 and completes its sequencing at step 740. If the head sensor is not off at step 742, the program sequences to the end of the program and the animal is not released.

If at step 734 of the program sequence there is an animal in the station, the next inquiry is whether this is a sort pen, at step 736. If it is a sort pen, then the program sequences to pass the animal data to the next station at step 748 and then to turn the status lights off on the control panel at step 750. Thereafter, the program sequences to step 736 to open the squeeze and head gates to release the animal.

If at step 746 in the sequence the indication is that the station is not a sort pen then the program sequences to the next step 752 to inquire whether the next station is ready for an animal. If the answer is no, the program sequences to the end at step 740 and the animal is not released. If the answer is yes at step 752, then the animal data is passed to the next station at step 748, the status lights are turned off at step 750 and the program sequences to step 736 to release the animal.

The next program to be described, with reference to the flow diagram of FIG. 33, is the "read ultrasound data" program 754. The first step in the program sequence is to inquire whether a backfat reading is available from the ultrasound computer at step 756. If one is not available, the program sequences to the end at step 758. If a reading is available, the computer is instructed to read the backfat reading from the ultrasound at step 760. Next, the program inquires whether the backfat reading is good at step 762. If it is not, then the program commands the computer to turn on the bad reading status light on the control panel at 764 and the program sequences to the end. If the reading is good then the "good reading" status light is turned on at the control panel at step 766. Then the good reading is added to the list of backfat readings for that animal at step 768.

After the reading, the program commands the computer at step 770 to count the number of other readings that are within 0.2 inches, as indicated at step 772. When that has been done, the program sequences back to step 770 until all such readings in the list have been counted as indicated. When that is done, the program sequences to step 774 and inquires whether there are four or more close readings. If there are four or more close readings, the next step 776 is to average the close readings. Then the computer turns on the "backfat complete" status light on the control panel at step 778 and the program ends.

If at step 774 there are not four or more close readings, then the program sequences to step 780 and asks if there are eight or more readings in the list. If there are not, the program sequences to the end at 758. If there are, the program instructs

the computer to clear the list and reset to start over at step 782 and then sequences to the end of the program at step 758.

The next program to be described is the FBS computer interface program 784 described with reference to the flow diagram of FIG. 34. This program operates the FBS interface indicated at 246 in FIG. 17. The first step 786 in the program is to send an initialize command to the FBS computer. The next step 788 in the program is to read a command from the FBS computer. The next 790 step in the program is to inquire whether an animal data request has been received from the FBS computer. If not, the program sequences back to step 788 to await a command from the FBS computer. If there is no command from the FBS computer or no response, the program sequences back to the beginning to send an initialize command to the FBS computer.

If at step 790 an animal data request is received from the FBS computer, an acknowledgement is sent to the FBS computer at step 792. Next, the program inquires whether data from the next animal is collected yet, at step 794. If the data has not yet been collected, the program returns to step 794 to await the collection of data. When data for the next animal has been collected, the program sequences to step 796 and sends the animal data to the FBS computer. Next, at step 798 the program waits to read a response from the FBS computer. Then, the program awaits receipt of an animal data acknowledgement from the FBS computer at step 800. If not received, the program requests the FBS computer to resend an acknowledgement. Upon an initialize command or no response from the FBS computer, the program sequences back to the initial step 786.

If the program receives an acknowledgement from the FBS computer that the animal data was received, the program next reads the sort pen assignment received from the FBS computer at step 802. Next, at step 804, the program inquires whether the sort pen assignment was received from the FBS computer. At this point if there is an initialize command from the FBS computer or no sort pen assignment from the FBS computer, the program sequences back to the initial step 786.

If there is a sort pen assignment received from the FBS computer, the program sends a sort pen acknowledgement to the FBS computer at step 806. Then, at step 808 the program commands the computer to update the current animal with its assigned sort pen number, in other words, to correlate the new sort pen assignment with the identified animal. The program then returns to step 788, awaiting a command from the FBS computer.

Finally, there is a program for loading the ECM (cattle management system) station configuration information into the process control computer. This program is diagrammed in FIG. 35 and indicated generally at 810. In the first step of its sequence the program inquires whether this is the end of the configuration file, at step 812. If the answer is yes, then the program sequences to step 814 to check for any missing definitions. Then the load configuration program ends at step 816. If the configuration file is not fully loaded, then from step 812 the program sequences to read the element definition from the configuration file at step 818. Then the program determines the definition type at step 820 and breaks the definition into its components at step 822 and creates the object specified by the definition at step 824 before sequencing back to the beginning of the load configuration program.

From the foregoing it will be appreciated that the disclosed computerized cattle management system and method provides a highly flexible system and method for measuring, sorting and processing animals, either on a group basis or an individual basis or in a combination of group and individual basis. It furthermore proves a means and method for projecting, on an individual animal basis, when that animal will be ready to be shipped from the feedlot to the packing plant for slaughter and what that animal's optimum finish weight will

be. The system also provides a means and method whereby the costs of maintaining animals in the feedlot can be determined on an individual animal basis so that such costs, on an individual animal basis, can be assessed to the animal's owners, thereby providing a highly efficient cost management tool.

the feeding period, and may be sorted into a marketing group different than its pen feeding group when it is finally ready for shipment to the packing plant. All of this is made possible by the ability to electronically identify each animal by ownership and physical characteristics and costs at any time, irrespective of the group it happens to be in at any given time.

TABLE 3A

Cattle Received Report by Load											
Period: Mar. 18, 1994 to Mar. 20, 1994				Research Division Agri-Research Feeders Lot: 495			CIR117 Seq 13 Page				
Pen	Date	Load			Average			Weight		Purchase Cost	
		No.	Revd.	Head	Sex	Pay	Rec	Shrink	Pay	Rec	
L4	Mar. 19, 1994	1	32	HF		678	678	0.00%	21,680	21,680	16,476.80
		AGE			YEARLING				160.00		
		BACKGROUND			WHEAT PASTURE				100.00		
		BREED OF FEEDER			ANGUS CROSS				25.00		
					CHAROLAIS				6.25		
					HEREFORD				28.00		
					HOLSTEIN CROSS				18.75		
					SHORTHORN X				22.00		
		DAYS IN PASTURE			154-161				100.00		
		DISPOSITION			DOCILE				95.00		
		HEALTH SCORE			EXCELLENT				100.00		
		MARKET TYPE			DIRECT				100.00		
		NUTRITION			WHEAT PASTURE				100.00		
		STRESS SCORE			EXCELLENT				100.00		
		WEATHER/ ARRIVAL			SUNNY & MILD				100.00		
Number of Loads:		1	32			678	678	0.00%	21,680	21,680	16,476.80
HF-HEIFERS		1	32			678	678	0.00%	21,680	21,680	16,476.80
		AGE			YEARLING				100.00%		
		BREED OF FEEDER			ANGUS CROSS				25.00%		
					CHAROLAIS				6.25%		
					HEREFORD				28.00%		
					HOLSTEIN CROSS				18.75%		
					SHORTHORN X				22.00%		
		BACKGROUND			WHEAT PASTURE				100.00%		
		DISPOSITION			DOCILE				95.00%		
		HEALTH SCORE			EXCELLENT				100.00%		
		MARKET TYPE			DIRECT				100.00%		
		NUTRITION			WHEAT PASTURE				100.00%		
		DAYS ON PASTURE			154-161				100.00%		
		STRESS SCORE			EXCELLENT				100.00%		
		WEATHER/ ARRIVAL			SUNNY & MILD				100.00%		

With the management system, no longer is it necessary to treat a group of animals received in a feedlot as a group throughout its period of stay in the feedlot. Instead, different groups of animals as received in a feedlot can be mixed with other groups regardless of ownership, based on management criteria such as animal type, DTF, OEW or other factors. Since each animal can be identified electronically at any time and at any place during its stay in the feedlot, with its ownership easily determined, it can be grouped with other animals with similar physical characteristics or OED's rather than being kept in a common ownership group while in the feedlot. Similarly, when animals are ready for slaughter, they can be sent to the packing plant without regard to ownership because their EID tags will identify them at packing plant as to ownership and thus costs and proceeds can be properly assessed and credited without regard to group.

From the foregoing, it should be apparent that a particular animal may be in one group or lot when it arrives in a feedlot, may be moved to a different group within a feed pen during

TABLE 3B

Pen Assignment Summary							
Source Lot: 495							
Source Pen: 59							
Sort Type: DAYS TO FINISH							
		Pen					
55							

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TABLE 3B-continued

Pen Assignment Summary							
Source Lot: 495							
Source Pen: 59							
Sort Type: DAYS TO FINISH							
Pen							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Max	1260	1260		1177			
Min	830	876		815			
Range	430	384		362			
<u>Current Weight</u>							
Average	787	875		766			
STD	120	66		66			
Max	1035	965		843			
Min	627	766		648			
Range	408	199		195			
<u>Frame</u>							
Average	5	6		4			
STD	1	1		1			
Max	7	7		7			
Min	3	3		3			
Range	4	4		4			
<u>Current Back Fat</u>							
Average	.22	.30		.33			
STD	.12	.11		.19			
Max	.42	.53		.75			
Min	.09	.17		.12			
Range	.33	.36		.63			

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TABLE 3C

PEN ASSIGNMENT DETAIL								
5	LOT:	495						
10	PEN:	57						
								Thu Apr. 28, 1994
	Sort Pen:	2						07:35:12
	Run Seq:	206						Page 1
	EID	VID	DTF	OFW	CWT	ADG	FM	BF
Ship Window: May 14, 1994 TO Sep. 28, 1994								
15	16817175	11	16	876	826	3.13	3	0.53
	16817094	4	32	1004	905	3.09	5	0.41
	16817763	22	45	1034	942	2.04	5	0.25
	16816164	9	59	1089	929	2.71	7	0.22
20	16814011	5	60	912	766	2.43	3	0.41
	16816227	24	75	1024	798	3.01	5	0.36
	16816430	16	83	1132	897	2.83	7	0.25
	16815742	28	98	1260	965	3.01	7	0.17
25	16816005	34	115	1260	931	2.86	7	0.31
	16814141	19	122	1175	843	2.72	7	0.17
	16813043	32	153	1260	824	2.85	5	0.24

TABLE 3D

MARKETING YARD SHEET
INDIVIDUAL ANIMAL LEVEL

Mar. 30, 1994

17:55:03

Measurement Date: Mar. 30. 1994

DIV: AGR

SEX: HF

Owner: Agri Research

Origin: Little

Type: Crossbred Heifers

C1##
page

TAG	PEN	HGp	LOT	Projected			Weights		DOF		Ration		
				DTF	Date	OFW	YG	BE	CURR	PUR	CPD	LPD	ID
25	59	495	38	0506	815	3.0	117.25	711	678	10	10	8	10
11	59	495	46	0514	876	3.0	117.25	757	678	10	10	8	10
15	59	495	53	0522	896	3.0	117.25	757	678	10		8	10
18	59	495	59	0527	821	3.0	117.25	668	678	10	10	8	10
4	59	495	62	0530	1004	3.0	117.25	843	678	10	10	8	10
3	59	495	65	0602	848	3.0	117.25	679	678	10	10	8	10
14	59	495	68	0606	904	3.0	117.25	727	678	10	10	8	10
22	59	495	75	0612	1034	2.0	117.25	817	678	10	10	8	10
9	59	495	89	0626	1089	2.0	117.25	832	678	10	10	8	10
5	59	495	90	0627	912	3.0	117.25	679	678	10	10	8	10
17	59	495	92	0630	830	3.0	117.25	576	678	10	10	8	10
20	58	495	97	0705	972	3.0	117.25	704	678	10	10	8	10
2	58	495	98	0706	965	3.0	117.25	710	678	10	10	8	10
24	58	495	104	0712	1024	2.0	117.25	722	678	10	10	8	10
26	58	495	104	0712	1044	2.0	117.25	742	678	10	10	8	10
30	58	495	107	0715	1034	3.0	117.25	755	678	10	10	8	10
13	58	495	107	0715	1012	3.0	117.25	733	678	10	10	8	10
16	58	495	113	0720	1132	2.0	117.25	805	678	10	10	8	10
21	58	495	113	0720	990	3.0	117.25	697	678	10	10	8	10
23	58	495	119	0726	1260	2.0	117.25	915	678	10	10	8	10
28	58	495	128	0804	1260	2.0	117.25	890	678	10	10	8	10
29	58	495	128	0805	1090	3.0	117.25	738	678	10	10	8	10
34	57	495	144	0821	1260	2.0	117.25	841	678	10	10	8	10
19	57	495	152	0828	1175	3.0	117.25	757	678	10	10	8	10

TABLE 3D-continued

MARKETING YARD SHEET INDIVIDUAL ANIMAL LEVEL																
TAG	PEN	HGp	LOT	ADG			Feed Intake				Treats/ HD		PROCS/ Hd		TOTALS/ Hd	
				CPD	LPD	ID	PCP	ACP	L7D	ID	Proj	Act	Proj	Act	Proj	TD
25	59		495	5.4	.0	5.4	18	22	23	22	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
11	59		495	5.8	.0	5.8	18	24	25	24	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
15	59		495	5.8	.0	5.8	18	24	25	24	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
18	59		495	5.1	.0	5.1	18	21	22	2	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
4	59		495	6.4	.0	6.4	18	27	28	27	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
3	59		495	5.2	.0	5.2	18	21	22	21	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
14	59		495	.6	.0	.6	18	23	24	23	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
22	59		495	6.2	.0	6.2	18	26	27	26	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
9	59		495	2.4	.0	2.4	18	26	27	26	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
5	59		495	2.0	.0	2.0	18	21	22	21	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
17	59		495	4.4	.0	4.4	18	18	19	18	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
20	58		495	5.4	.0	5.4	18	22	23	22	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
2	58		495	5.4	.0	5.4	18	22	23	22	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
24	58		495	5.5	.0	5.5	18	23	24	23	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
26	58		495	5.7	.0	5.7	18	23	24	23	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
30	58		495	2.4	.0	2.4	18	24	25	24	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
13	58		495	5.6	.0	5.6	18	23	24	23	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
16	58		495	6.1	.0	6.1	18	25	26	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
21	58		495	5.3	.0	5.3	18	22	23	22	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
23	58		495	7.0	.0	7.0	18	29	30	29	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
28	58		495	6.8	.0	6.8	18	28	29	28	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
29	58		495	5.6	.0	5.6	18	23	24	23	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
34	57		495	6.4	.0	6.4	18	27	28	27	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75
19	57		495	5.8	.0	5.8	18	24	25	24	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75

TABLE 3E

MARKETING YARD SHEET INDIVIDUAL ANIMAL LEVEL																
TAG	PEN	HGp	LOT	Projected				Weights			DOF			Ruton		
				DTF	Date	OFW	YG	BE	CURR	PUR	CPD	LPD	ID	No.	Days	
25	59	A	495	21	0513	869	3.0	118.39	811	678	24	10	34	6	12	
11	59	A	495	24	0156	888	3.0	118.04	826	678	24	10	34	6	12	
15	59	A	495	32	0524	896	3.0	117.07	813	678	24	10	34	6	12	
4	59	A	495	34	0526	993	3.0	117.82	905	678	24	10	34	6	12	
3	59	A	495	36	0528	863	3.0	116.01	769	678	24	10	34	6	12	
18	59	A	495	43	0604	856	3.0	114.76	744	678	24	10	34	6	12	
14	59	B	495	43	0604	905	3.0	115.60	793	678	24	10	34	6	12	
22	59	B	495	51	0612	1089	2.0	115.92	942	678	24	10	34	6	12	
5	59	B	495	56	0617	912	3.0	113.99	766	678	24	10	34	6	12	
17	59	B	495	58	0619	787	3.0	109.23	628	678	24	10	34	6	12	
9	59	B	495	68	0629	1127	2.0	114.30	929	678	24	10	34	6	12	
2	58	A	495	68	0629	970	3.0	113.64	793	678	24	10	34	6	12	
16	58	A	495	68	0629	1095	2.0	113.62	897	678	24	10	34	6	12	
20	58	A	495	74	0705	988	3.0	112.04	785	678	24	10	34	6	12	
23	58	A	495	78	0709	1260	2.0	116.07	1035	678	24	10	34	6	12	
24	58	A	495	82	0713	1035	2.0	110.62	798	678	24	10	34	6	12	
26	58	A	495	82	0713	1038	2.0	110.69	801	678	24	10	34	6	12	

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Page 1

TABLE 3E-continued

MARKETING YARD SHEET INDIVIDUAL ANIMAL LEVEL																			
Apr. 22, 1994 17:55:11 Measurement Date: Apr. 22, 1994 DIV: AGR SEX: HF Owner: Agri Research Origin: Little Type: Crossbred Heifers															C1#### Page 1				
21	58	A	495	82	0713	962	3.0	111.62	749	678	24	10	34	6	12				
30	58	A	495	90	0721	1031	3.0	112.60	798	678	24	10	34	6	12				
29	58	A	495	92	0723	1097	3.0	112.39	843	678	24	10	34	6	12				
13	58	A	495	94	0725	1055	3.0	112.77	811	678	24	10	34	6	12				
28	58	A	495	102	0802	1260	2.0	113.93	965	678	24	10	34	6	12				
34	57	A	495	113	0813	1260	2.0	112.65	931	678	24	10	34	6	12				
19	57	A	495	115	0815	1159	3.0	111.58	843	678	24	10	34	6	12				
ADG					Feed Intake				Treats/ HD		PROCS/ Hd		TOTALS/ Hd						
TAG	PEN	HGp	LOT	CPD	LPD	ID	PCP	ACP	L7D	ID	Proj	Act	Proj	Act	Proj	TD			
25	59	A	495	4.2	5.4	4.6	22	26	25	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
11	59	A	495	2.9	5.8	3.7	21	27	25	26	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
15	59	A	495	2.3	5.8	3.3	21	26	25	26	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
4	59	A	495	2.6	6.4	3.7	21	29	28	29	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
3	59	A	495	3.8	5.2	4.2	21	25	23	24	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
18	59	A	495	3.2	5.1	3.7	21	24	23	23	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
14	59	B	495	2.8	5.5	3.6	21	26	24	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
22	59	B	495	5.2	6.2	5.5	21	31	29	29	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
5	59	B	495	3.6	5.2	4.1	21	25	23	24	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
17	59	B	495	2.2	4.4	2.8	21	20	19	20	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
9	59	B	495	4.0	6.3	4.7	21	30	28	29	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
2	58	A	495	3.5	5.4	4.0	21	26	24	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
16	58	A	495	3.8	6.1	4.5	21	29	27	28	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
20	58	A	495	3.4	5.4	4.0	21	26	24	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
23	58	A	495	5.0	7.0	5.6	21	34	32	32	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
24	58	A	495	3.2	5.5	3.9	21	26	24	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
26	58	A	495	2.5	5.7	3.4	21	26	24	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
21	58	A	495	2.2	5.3	3.1	21	24	23	24	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
30	58	A	495	1.8	5.8	3.0	21	26	24	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
29	58	A	495	4.4	5.6	4.7	21	27	26	26	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
13	58	A	495	3.3	5.6	3.9	21	26	25	25	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
28	58	A	495	3.1	6.8	4.2	21	31	29	30	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
34	57	A	495	3.8	6.4	4.5	21	30	28	29	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			
19	57	A	495	3.6	5.8	4.2	21	27	26	26	1	.00	5	4.75	6	4.75			

TABLE 3F

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Pen Closeout Report
Research-Division
As of Apr. 22, 1994

Lot 495 Pen 59 Owner AGRI Agri Research Center, Inc. 100.00

Item	Pounds		Dollars		50	
	Head	Total	Avg	/CWT		/Head
INCOME						
Inventory EXPENSES	10	7,867	787	73.25	576.28	5,762.80
Cattle: HEIFERS	10	6,775	678	76.00	514.90	5,149.00
Feed and Other:			COG	/Head	Total	
FEED CHARGES		50.15	54.77	547.60		
CATTLE INSURANCE		0.16	0.17	1.70		
YARDAGE		1.56	1.70	17.00		
PROCESSING		4.35	4.75	47.40		
Sub Total Feed and Other		56.21	61.38	613.80		

TABLE 3F-continued

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Pen Closeout Report
Research-Division
As of Apr. 22, 1994

Lot 495 Pen 59 Owner AGRI Agri Research Center, Inc. 100.00

Total Pounds Gained /Head	1,092.00	Total Proc & Med /Head	47.45
Average Daily Gain	3.21	Total Deaths	0.00
Daily Feed Cost/Head	1.61	% Death Loss	0.00%
Daily Total Cost/Head	1.81	% Shrink into Yard	0.00%
Total Pounds Fed	8,040.86	Total Feed Cost	547.69
Total Pounds Fed/Head	804.09	Avg Ration Cost/Ton	XXXXXX
Avg Daily Consumption	23.65	Cost of Gain	56.21
Wet Conversion	7.36	(Deads in)	
Dry Conversion	6.02	Cost of Gain	56.21
In Mar. 19, 1994 Out:		(Deads out)	
		Total Head Days	340.00
		Average Days on Feed	34.00

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TABLE 3F-continued

Pen Closeout Report Research-Division As of Apr. 22, 1994 Lot 495 Pen 59 Owner AGRI Agri Research Center, Inc. 100.00	5	Pen Closeout Report Research-Division As of Apr. 22, 1994 Lot 495 Pen 59 Owner AGRI Agri Research Center, Inc. 100.00
SUMMARY 10 HEIFERS In Wt 678 Out Wt 787		Gained 3.21 for 34 DOF Cost of Gain: 56.21 Profit 0.00 (Before Interest)

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TABLE 3F-continued

TABLE 3G

Close-Out Summary BY LOT																														
LOT: 42894	PENS: 553	HEAD 27	SEX S						DATE Apr. 28, 1993																					
OTAL PFT: \$4,957.98																														
SIRE: ANGUS DAM: BRAFORD																														
VID	PFT	TCOG	ADG	PE	QG	YG	HCW	DP %	LW	PWT	DOF	FCOG	PROC	TREAT	TCOG															
567	329.96	45.00	3.37	6.31	CH-	4.0	875	66.5	1315	634	202	43.00	11.36	0.00	45.00															
563	64.18	45.00	3.64	6.25	SE+	5.0	777	62.8	1238	648	162	42.00	11.36	0.00	45.00															
564	76.03	57.00	2.97	7.16	SE+	4.2	736	61.8	1190	590	202	48.00	11.36	33.25	57.00															
565	233.46	42.00	3.93	5.79	SE-	5.0	915	66.6	1373	736	162	39.00	11.36	0.00	42.00															
566	122.80	66.00	2.47	9.20	SE-	3.3	699	65.3	1070	620	182	62.00	11.36	0.00	56.00															
AVG	165.29	51.00	3.28	6.94		4.30	800	65	1237	646	182	46.80	11.36	6.65	51.00															
SIRE: ANGUS DAM: BRANGUS																														
VID	PFT	TCOG	ADG	PE	QG	YG	HCW	DP %	LW	PWT	DOF	FCOG	PROC	TREAT	TCOG															
423	151.91	39.00	3.57	5.98	SE-	2.9	731	61.9	1181	460	202	36.00	11.36	0.00	39.00															
421	296.59	40.00	3.87	5.69	SE-	3.9	811	62.6	1296	592	182	38.00	11.36	0.00	40.00															
425	74.46	63.00	2.23	9.17	CH	3.2	661	64.7	1022	508	231	60.00	11.36	0.00	63.00															
420	113.36	43.00	3.23	6.61	SE+	2.7	693	62.2	1114	462	202	40.00	11.36	0.00	43.00															
427	282.11	45.00	3.45	6.38	SE+	3.5	775	64.1	1210	582	182	43.00	11.36	0.00	45.00															
422	198.62	45.00	3.06	6.97	CH-	3.0	734	64.5	1138	480	215	42.00	11.36	0.00	45.00															
AVG	186.18	45.83	3.24	6.80	0.00	3.20	734	63	1160	514	202	43.17	11.36	0.00	45.83															
SIRE: ANGUS DAM: ANGUS																														
VID	PFT	TCOG	ADG	PE	QG	YG	HCW	DP %	LW	PWT	DOF	FCOG	PROC	TREAT	TCOG															
619	254.93	42.75	3.25	7.60	CH	2.3	742	66.6	1114	574	166	38.73	10.04	0.00	42.75															
616	-129.50	58.02	2.59	9.50	SE	3.0	701	62.9	1114	558	215	50.27	10.04	19.50	58.02															
633	231.38	46.77	3.17	8.50	CH	2.8	762	63.2	1205	562	203	43.17	10.04	0.00	46.77															
628	222.01	53.51	3.08	8.60	CH	2.7	813	65.7	1238	612	203	45.61	10.04	25.58	53.51															
661	255.60	43.86	3.15	7.90	CH	3.7	822	65.3	1258	660	190	40.12	10.04	0.00	43.86															
929	154.05	52.96	2.58	9.70	CH	4.1	708	63.8	1109	554	215	48.81	10.04	0.00	52.96															
AVG	164.75	49.65	2.97	8.63	0.00	3.10	758	65	1173	587	199	44.45	10.04	7.51	49.65															
SIRE: ANGUS DAM: HERF																														
VID	PFT	TCOG	ADG	PE	QG	YG	HCW	DP %	LW	PWT	DOF	FCOG	PROC	TREAT	TCOG															
907	178.77	45.63	3.05	8.20	CH	2.1	741	64.3	1152	646	166	41.34	10.04	0.00	45.63															
908	257.39	42.53	3.60	6.80	CH	2.4	906	63.1	1435	652	215	36.16	10.04	25.58	42.53															
902	266.58	42.83	3.25	7.70	CH	2.9	811	68.7	1181	642	166	38.81	10.04	0.00	42.83															
903	181.05	44.14	3.15	7.90	SE	2.6	789	64.6	1219	696	166	39.99	10.04	0.00	44.14															
906	203.41	50.74	2.74	9.00	CH	3.1	748	69.6	1075	620	166	45.97	10.04	0.00	50.74															
905	183.21	42.67	3.26	7.60	SE	2.3	768	63.7	1205	664	166	38.66	10.04	0.00	42.67															
904	216.42	44.13	3.10	8.10	CH	2.5	809	63.6	1272	606	215	40.68	10.04	0.00	44.13															
910	171.61	49.23	2.78	9.00	CH	3.0	792	64.4	1229	632	215	45.38	10.04	0.00	49.23															
911	172.01	50.52	2.75	9.10	CH	1.2	686	63.2	1085	628	166	45.77	10.04	0.00	50.52															
909	245.58	43.41	3.15	7.90	CH	3.8	893	65.0	1373	696	215	40.01	10.04	0.00	43.41															
AVG	202.6	45.583	3.083	8.13	0	2.6	794	65	1223	649	186	41.277	10.04	2.558	45.583															
LOT AVERAGE																														
PFT	TCOG	ADG	PE	QG		YG	HCW	DP %	LW	PWT	DOF	FCOG	PROC	TREAT	TCOG															
AVG	183.63	43.34	2.61	6.42		2.91	703	59	1090	548	174	39.60	9.65	3.58	43.34															
STD	15.02	1.22	3.06			1.21	230	19	356	185	59	13.72	3.11	8.66	15.02															

TABLE 3G-continued

Close-Out Summary BY LOT																
LOT:	42894				HEAD 27				SEX S				DATE Apr. 28, 1993			
MAX	329.96	66.00	3.93	9.70	5.00	915	70	1435	736	231	62.00	11.36	33.25	66.00		
MIN	-129.50	39.00	2.23	5.69	1.20	661	62	1022	460	162	36.00	10.04	0.00	39.00		
RANG	469.46	27.00	1.70	4.01	3.80	254	8	413	276	69	26.00	1.32	33.25	27.00		

TABLE 4A

Feedlot Business System															
Type in the three letters ahs to start the Animal Health Program															
1. Type FMS															
2. TERM = (ANSI) typewy 150															
Feedlot Business System															
Agri Research Database															
ver 4.1															
Mar. 03, 1994															
Enter user ID _____															
Access Micro-System															
3. Push the DEL key on the keyboard															
4. S Type ECM															
ELECTRONIC CATTLE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM															
0 - Exit															
1 - Perform an ECM Session															
2 - Modify ECM Session Configuration															
3 - Print the Results of an ECM Session															
5. Type 1 then press the Enter key															
ELECTRONIC CATTLE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM															
Currently defined Session Types:															
1 2 3 4															
Choose Session Type from above list															
6. Type 2 then press the Enter key															

TABLE 4B

1 - Session Types: 2	
1 - Description: Demo	
3 - Process control computer present?	[yes]
4 - Unused	[no]
5 - Type of Sorting?	[AR]
6 - Read Electronic Ear Tags?	[yes]
7 - Insert New Visual Ear Tags?	[no]
8 - Cattle Type?	[not Recorded]
9 - Frame Type?	[not Recorded]
10 - Flesh Type?	[not Recorded]
11 - AGE?	[not Recorded]
12 - Weight?	[Automatically]
13 - Back Fat?	[Automatically]
14 - Loin Depth?	[not Recorded]
15 - Rump Height?	[Keyed In]
16 - Rump Width?	[not Recorded]
17 - Shoulder Height?	[not Recorded]
18 - Shoulder Width?	[not Recorded]
19 - Top Length?	[not Recorded]
20 - Body Length?	[not Recorded]
21 - Girth?	[not Recorded]
Enter row = to change,	
0 to finish or 99 to delete session	
7. Type 0 then push the Enter key	
1 - Sort Name: AR	
2 - Description:	
3 - Sorting Criteria?	[Optimum END Date]
4 - FLEX Sort?	[yes]
5 - FLEX pen Number?	[3]
6 - Sort Pen Count?	[3]
Number to change - or - 0 when finished	

TABLE 4B-continued

15	8. Type 0 then push the Enter key Number of head to be sorted in the Session
----	--

TABLE 4C

20	How many Animals should be sorted into each group
25	1 - Sort Pen 1 final count ____ ? 2 - Sort Pen 2 final count ____ ? 3 - Flex Pen 3 final count ____ ? 4 - Sort Pen 4 final count ____ ? Number to Change - or - 0 when finished
30	9. Type 0 then press Enter key
35	ELECTRONIC CATTLE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
40	Animal?? of??

Lot	Pen	Sort Pen	Head Count
EID			
Tag 0		1	0
Frame 0		2	0
Weight 0		FLEX	0
Rump Ht.		4	0
Back fat		5	0
OED Dec. 31, 1999		6	0

- 10. Are these cattle all from the same lot?
- 11. ... And what is this lot?
- 12. Are these cattle all from the same pen?
- 13. ... And what is this pen?
- 14. Enter the Date that sorting occurred
(usually today's date)?
Trying to establish communication with
Process Control Computer

TABLE 4D

50	Process Control Setup
55	1. Power on computer C:ECM> 2. Type ECM ***ENTER RUN PARAMETERS*** LOG FILENAME 3. Enter today's date 040194 Sort Types: 0 - No Sort 1 - FBS Sort 2 - Weight 3 - Days of Feed Sort 4 - Manual Sort Enter Sort Type == 4. If you Enter 0 go to #9 5. If you Enter 1 go to #16 6. If you Enter 2 go to #17 7. If you Enter 3 go to #37

TABLE 4D-continued

Process Control Setup
8. If you Enter 4 go to #60 Sort Type 0
9. Catch Heads (Y N) ==
10. Squeeze Animals (Y N) ==
11. Weigh Animals (Y N) ==
12. Read Electronic ID (Y N) ==
13. Do Animals already have EID Tags (Y N) ==
14. Read Back Fat (Y N) ==
15. Take Video Measurements (Y N) ==
ECM Computer is Ready to go

TABLE 4E

Sort Type 1
16. Is this a Flex Grop Sort (Y N) == If Y the program will start If N go to step #9 Sort Type 2
17. Minimum Weight for Pen 1 ==
18. Maximum Weight for Pen 1 ==
19. Minimum Weight for Pen 2 ==
20. Maximum Weight for Pen 2 ==
21. Minimum Weight for Pen 3 ==
22. Maximum Weight for Pen 3 ==
23. Minimum Weight for Pen 4 ==
24. Maximum Weight for Pen 4 ==
25. Minimum Weight for Pen 5 ==
26. Maximum Weight for Pen 5 ==
27. Minimum Weight for Pen 6 ==
28. Maximum Weight for Pen 6 ==
29. Minimum Weight for Pen 7 ==
30. Maximum Weight for Pen 7 ==
31. Lot Number ==
32. Source Pen Number ==
33. Head Count ==
34. Breed Frame type ==
35. Average Weight ==
36. Go To #9

TABLE 4F

37. Sort Type 3
38. Minimum Weight for Pen 1 ===
39. Maximum Weight for Pen 1 ===
40. Minimum Weight for Pen 2 ===
41. Maximum Weight for Pen 2 ===
42. Minimum Weight for Pen 3 ===
43. Maximum Weight for Pen 3 ===
44. Minimum Weight for Pen 4 ===
45. Maximum Weight for Pen 4 ===
46. Minimum Weight for Pen 5 ===
47. Maximum Weight for Pen 5 ===
48. Minimum Weight for Pen 6 ===
49. Maximum Weight for Pen 6 ===
50. Minimum Weight for Pen 7 ===
51. Maximum Weight for Pen 7 ===
52. Lot Number ===
53. Source Number ===
54. Head Count ===
55. Breed, Frame Type ===
56. Average Weight ===
57. Out Weight ===
58. Average Daily Gain ===
Days on Feed??? (calculated by computer)
59. Go To #9
60. Sort Type 4
61. Go To #9

VIII.) Animal Health History

This subsection describes various process steps and system components for providing up-to-date health histories of animals. These process steps and system components can be used in conjunction with the disclosed AIF.

Referring now to FIG. 42, there is shown an animal **1011** and an operator **1211** in an area of a cattle feedlot referred to as an animal hospital **1411**. An animal **1011** may be brought to the hospital **1411** for a check on its physical condition, for treatments that are administered to all animals in a particular lot, and if an animal is to be individually treated for sickness. Typically, the animal hospital **1411** includes a cattle chute and a head gate (not shown) for holding the animal stationary while its weight and temperature are checked and any drugs are administered.

As indicated in FIG. 42, the system in this embodiment includes a portable hospital unit **1611** that can be transported to the hospital **1411** for use by the operator **1211**. This portability enables the operator to care for cattle with a single unit at several hospitals located around the feedlot rather than at a single hospital to which all cattle must be directed. Coupled to the portable unit **1611** is a means for entering data into the unit such as an optical character reader, which in this first embodiment comprises a portable bar code scanner **1811** available from a number of sources including the MSI Data Corporation under the name SYMBOLTEC LS8100. The scanner **1811**, which is stored in a holster **2011** mounted to a side of the unit **1611**, is adapted to read indicia means such as an ear tag **2211** bearing optical characters such as a bar code for uniquely identifying each animal. Rather than having to write down the animal's identifying number on a sheet, therefore, the operator **1211** need only scan the ear tag **2211** and the identifying number is electronically read and accurately recorded within the unit **1611**. The portable unit also includes a character menu sheet **2411** that bears optical characters such as bar codes corresponding to treatment data comprising the observed physical condition of the animal as well as drug treatments that may be administered. The sheet **2411** is mounted behind a clear plastic door of the unit **1611** and includes bar codes on the sheet's left and right margins. The bar codes on the left margin are for entering identification numbers of drugs, numerical quantities, and menu selection steps during program execution. The bar codes on the right margin are for entering sickness codes, sex of the animal, and commands for scrolling through the prior health history, for entering data and for quitting after observation or treatment is concluded. The operator can thus enter the identity of the animal and treatment data by simply scanning the menu sheet **2411** with the scanner **1811**. The treatment data is recorded along with the animal's identifying number within the unit **1611**. Visual feedback to the operator **1211** of the prior health history and the data just entered is provided by a display device such as video monitor **2511**. The monitor **2511** also displays the program prompts provided to the operator **1211** by the unit **1611** for entering the data, as will be described in detail hereafter.

FIG. 43 is a schematic diagram showing the elements within the chassis of the unit **1611**. The scanner **1811** is connected via a spring cord to a conventional laser interface module **2611** such as MSI Data Corporation Model 1365 for communicating data represented by optical characters to a portable terminal **2811**. The data terminal **2811** is of conventional design such as a PDTIII available from the MSI Data Corporation and includes a microprocessor, associated memory for storing an instruction program and for recording data, a keyboard **2911** for data entry, and a display **30** for displaying executing programs and recorded data. The key-

board 2911 is reached through the door opening of the unit 1611 and is an alternative to the scanner 1811 for entering data that is not bar coded, such as the time and date of treatment and the lot number of the animal, or if the scanner malfunctions. Also shown in the schematic is an optional liquid crystal display (LCD) screen 3211 connected to the terminal 28 through a reset switch 3411, a power switch 3511, and a selector switch 3611. The reset switch 3411 reinitializes the module 2611. The switch 3511 controls power to the scanner 1811 and LCD screen 3211 to electrically disconnect them when not required by the operator. The selector switch 3611 directs the data that is entered via the scanner 1811 into the terminal 2811 to either the LCD screen 3211 (visible through the transparent door of unit 1611 above the menu sheet 2411) or to the video monitor 2511 via a serial data connector 3811 such as an RS232 port. These additional display devices are optionally available because of the difficulty in reading the display 3011 from a distance. The LCD screen 3211 is normally selected by a single operator while the monitor 2511 is usually employed when a crew is working in the hospital 1411 and a number of the members must view the display simultaneously. The power source for the unit 1611 is a battery 4011 which is charged through a power supply line via the connector 3811.

Referring to FIG. 44, the data treatment recorded by the unit 1611 is periodically transferred to a host computer 5011 remote from the animal hospital 1411 to update the health histories of observed and treated animals. The host computer 5011 is intended for collecting data on feedlot operations in general and maintains the cumulative health history of each animal in the feedlot. The portable unit 1611 when transferring the data is coupled to the host computer 5011 via a conducting cable 5211. The computer 5011 in turn is adapted to collect the treatment data recorded within the portable unit 1611 and produce an accumulation of such data associated with each animal. This accumulation of data comprises the animal's health history. After the current data is transferred, the computer 5011 is programmed to transfer to unit 1611 in return the up-to-date health history of each animal as well as current feedlot information, such as newly established lot numbers. The cable 5211 also includes the power supply line for charging the battery 4011 within the unit 1611.

FIG. 45 is a schematic diagram showing the elements comprising the computer 5011. The computer itself is of conventional design and includes a video monitor 5411 for displaying data and a keyboard 5611 for data entry. The computer 5011 includes an interface board 5811 for receiving data entered via a second bar code scanner 6211 and a second laser interface module 6411. The interface board 5811 transfers the data to and from a central microprocessor 6611 equipped with internal memory and disk drives. Data and instruction programs stored in memory and on disk can be viewed on monitor 5411. The computer 5011 is also connected to a printer 6811 for printing the health histories and other related documents. Power is supplied to the computer through a conventional power supply 7211. The power supply 7211 is also coupled to a battery charger 7411 which supplies power for the unit 1611. The up-to-date animal health histories, programming, and other feedlot information are transmitted as serial data from the computer 5011 along with power to the unit 1611 via a connector 7611 coupled to the cable 5211.

The host computer 5011 serves a number of functions in addition to collecting treatment data to produce health histories for each animal treated. One related function is tracking inventory of drugs for treatment of the animals. Referring again to FIG. 45, computer 5011 is located adjacent to a drug room 7711 which stores drug inventory. Each drug container

7811 is labeled with a bar code 7911 for identifying the drugs therein and a menu sheet 8011 is present for entering the amount of drugs within each container when removed for drug treatment and the amount remaining in each container when returned for restocking or when additional amounts are added to inventory. The computer 5011 is programmed to compare the net amount of drugs taken from the inventory as communicated by the scanner 6211 against the amount of drugs used in treatment in the animal hospital 1411 as communicated by the scanner 1811. The difference between the two amounts over a predetermined time can thereby be determined for monitoring loss due to breakage, theft, etc. This difference, as well as the comparable amounts, are printed at request as a drug usage report as will be described.

FIG. 46 shows a second embodiment of the system for possible use where a continuous source of power such as AC power is available in the hospital 1411. The system includes a remote "dumb" terminal comprising the scanner 1811, the video display 2511, and a keyboard 7511, all in communication with the host computer 5011 through a node 8311 that includes communication ports and a power supply. The terminal acts an extension of host computer 5011, relaying treatment data to the computer in real time and displaying the up-to-date health histories transferred to the display from the host computer. This real time communication, when possible, avoids the need for physically moving the portable unit to the host computer and the delay in updating the prior health histories of the animals.

FIG. 46 also shows data entry means such as a transmitter-receiver antenna 8511 and indicia means such as transponder 8711 attached to an ear for identifying the animal 1011. The antenna is preferably of a type similar to an RDREO1, integrator reader available from Allflex International and the tag is preferably a transponder of the type similar to an EID ear tag also available from Allflex International. The antenna is mounted along side the cattle chute 8911 and emits a signal that reaches the transponder 8711 when animal 1011 passes by the antenna 8511. The tag 8711 in response emits a unique signal identifying the animal, which is electronically "read" by the antenna 8711 and communicated to the host computer 5011 via a computer interface unit 9111 such as a CIUMO1 from Allflex International. Alternatively, the transponder 8711 may be an active transmitter that continuously emits a radio signal for reception by a passive antenna 8511. This means for automatically identifying the animal avoids the delay associated with the operator having to move to each animal for identifying it by scanning the ear tag. The entry of treatment data, however, is handled in the same manner as in the first embodiment, with the scanner 1811 utilized to scan bar codes on menu sheet 2411 corresponding to physical conditions and any drug treatment administered to the animal. The keyboard 7511, however, is available if data cannot be entered via the antenna 8511 or scanner 1811.

The computer 5011 and data terminal 2811 within unit 1611 are programmed in BASIC, according to the method illustrated in the flowcharts of FIGS. 47 through 49. FIGS. 47A and B show the options available to the operator upon logging onto the computer 5011. A main menu (8111) appears with three options. An inventory menu (8211) is selected for working with the drug inventory; a hospital/processing menu (8411) is selected for working with the cattle feedlot records; or the procedure for monitoring the removal and restocking of drugs is selected as drugs are to be used, such as in the animal hospital 1411. With this third option, the operator scans the bar code 7911 of the containers 7811 that contain drugs required for treatment. He is then prompted to specify the purpose of the drug (8611), specify

the cattle lots the drug is being used for (8811), and to enter the drug amounts removed and restocked (9011). This data is used to adjust the book inventory stored within the computer's memory (9211). The entry of data is indicated by "carriage returns" (CR).

The inventory menu option (8211) is selected for monitoring the inventory. For example, one choice thereunder is to print the daily inventory report, with the book inventory, restocking information, and transactions grouped by product (9411). Another option is to manually adjust the inventory in case of a breakage of drugs within the inventory (9611). Other options include monitoring the difference between physical inventory as determined by a count and book inventory as determined by the checking in and checking out of drugs previously described. From the inventory menu (8211), the operator can also enter the physical inventory for comparison against the book inventory (9811). The difference between physical inventory and book inventory of each product (1001) can then be presented. The actual physical usage as determined by a physical inventory of the drugs can be compared with the amount administered (1021). The totals can then be adjusted as appropriate (1041). The operator can additionally print the net amount taken from inventory for drug treatment against the amount recorded from the portable unit 16 (1051) as administered.

The third option of the main menu (8111), the hospital/processing menu (8411), enables the operator to set up new lots for cattle brought into the feedlot and to prepare group drug treatments known as processing orders and hospital treatments which are administered to the animals. Referring now to FIG. 48B, a first option is a lot number menu (1061) appearing at the right of the figure and is selected whenever a new cattle lot is to be set up (1081). This menu allows the operator to add header information to the lot (110), change the header information (1121), or review the lots presently within the feedlot operation (1141). The lot menu (1061) also includes an option for deleting a cattle lot (1161) after the cattle within the lot have been shipped from the feedlot.

A second option under the hospital processing menu is a processing order menu (1181). Within this menu is a command for adding a processing order (1201). First, a number is assigned to a unique combination of drugs to be administered as the processing order or treatment (1221). The drugs desired are then selected (1241), and the dosages per head or per 100 pounds are entered (1261). The selection of drugs and dosages are then repeated until the processing order is complete (1271). The menu (1181) also permits the operator to print a list of current processing orders (1281) or delete an existing processing order (1301). An operator can also view a present processing order (1321) and change it if desired (1341) by changing the drugs or their amounts (1361).

Referring now to FIG. 48A, a third option under the hospital/processing menu (8411) is a hospital treatment menu (1371). Hospital treatments differ from processing orders in that hospital treatments are normally intended for specific sicknesses and include a combination of drugs for treating that sickness. Processing orders, on the other hand, are not directed to specific sicknesses and are typically administered to all cattle in a lot, outside the animal hospital 1411. The hospital treatment menu (1371) includes basically the same selections as in the processing order menu (1181) and for brevity descriptions of the selections therein are not repeated here.

The other options under the hospital/processing menu (8411) include an option (1381) at the left of FIG. 48A enabling the operator to assign and record treatments for the animals without entering the data through the portable unit

16. This option minimizes data entry where it is known that all cattle in a given lot will receive a specified treatment. The option (1381) includes a command for updating the figures for drugs used in each hospital treatment (1401). A similar option (1421) allows the operator to assign one or more drugs or processing orders to one or more lots. The operator can print the processing sheet for each order (1441) and also has the ability to update figures in the orders for the drugs used (1461).

Just as he can assign drugs and treatments to lots, the operator has the option of deleting and editing treatments (1481). These options include deleting previously assigned treatments (1501), editing existing treatments for a given animal (1521), and entering new hospital treatments for a given animal (1541).

Communication via cable 5211 with the portable unit 1611 is also handled through the hospital/processing menu (8411). The menu (8411) allows the operator to print the daily hospital report (1561) of the animals treated as well as receive the day's hospital treatment from the portable (1581). The daily treatments are stored on disk in appropriate lot files (1601). The operator can also print the day's hospital and processing activity with cost information (1621). The updated health history and new lot numbers are then be downloaded into the portable unit 16 to keep it current (1641). The program also updates in memory the amount of drugs used in treating each animal (1661).

One concern of feedlots is the shipping of cattle not yet suitable for consumption. A further option under the menu (8411) allows the operator to check when a lot may be shipped (1681) by entering the lot number and estimated shipping date (1701). Animals that are not ready for shipping within the lot are then displayed by number (1721).

Referring again to FIG. 48B, an operator selects the report/printout menu option (1741) whenever a report on treatments administered for each lot is required. Under menu (1741), an operator can print a treatment report which indicates all hospital treatments between any two given dates (1761). The operator may also print the lot reports which indicate all treatment with drug cost, both processing and hospital, administered to a specified lot since a lot was created (1781). A third selection is for summarizing information on each lot by simply printing the header (1801).

One other option shown allows the operator under menu (8411) to enter the sickness names such as bloat, prolapse, etc., that will be recognized by the portable unit 1611 and will appear on menu sheet 2411 (1861). If the sickness codes are changed at the hospital/processing menu, the menu sheet 2411 is also updated.

The treatment data recorded in the portable unit 1611 during a treatment session is entered in response to prompts from the instructional program stored within the terminal 2811. FIGS. 49A-49C illustrate the operation of this program. Referring to FIG. 49A, the program prompts the operator 1211 on the display such as video monitor 2511 to enter the date and time of treatment via the keyboard 2911 (2001). A main menu (2021) then appears on the monitor 2511, which gives the operator several choices. One choice allows the operator to include and exclude various prompts and verifications of entered data which appear throughout the figure. Deletion of verifications, shown in these flowcharts, may be made by experienced operators who know the program operation well. The second choice commands the unit 1611 to transfer its data to the host computer 5011. A third choice allows for the entry of treatment data initially.

The operator thus begins treatment with this third choice by scanning the appropriate number on the menu sheet 2411. He

is then prompted to scan the ear tag of the animal to be treated or key in the tag number to identify the animal to the unit 1611 (2031). If he scans the tag, the number is automatically verified (2041). If keyed in, the ear tag number is then displayed so that the operator may visually verify his entry (2051) before scanning a CR. Once the ear tag has been verified, the program checks to see if the animal is new or has a previous treatment history (2061). If the animal does have a record, the monitor 2511 displays the last treatment for the animal (2081). The operator can then scroll through previous treatments (2101) via commands on menu sheet 24 to determine the health history of the animal (2121). The operator can also quit the program by scanning the quit command on the menu sheet 2411. The quit option is always available throughout the program, though not repeatedly shown in the figure for clarity. All data entered before the quit command is invoked is recorded. On the other hand, the operator can always "bail out" of the program if trouble develops therein by scanning the numerals 9999. No data entered during a treatment session is saved if the operator "bails out."

If no previous treatments have been administered, the operator enters the lot number through keyboard 2911 (2131) and scans the CR. The program then compares the lot number with those stored in memory. If it is a new lot number, the program alerts the operator that it is included and prompts for reentry. Entering the same number a second time establishes the lot number. The program then prompts the operator to verify his entry (2141), which he does by a CR scan.

The operator is then prompted to enter a sickness code (2161), such as a respiratory or intestinal condition, appearing on the menu sheet 2411. The code is then displayed momentarily for the operator's verification (2201). If the sickness code entered indicates the animal is dead (2221), this data is stored immediately (2241) and the treatment session is ended. If the animal is merely sick, however, the operator is prompted for the severity of the illness and enters a severity code number in response such as 1, 2, or 3 (2261) from the menu sheet 2411.

Following entry of the animal's identity and sickness diagnosis, the operator may be prompted for other physical conditions such as the animal's temperature. Referring to FIG. 49B, he enters the temperature (2321) in response, and it is displayed by the program for operator verification. The last recorded temperature is also displayed (2341). The program then prompts the operator for the animal's destination, and the operator enters the pen type and particular pen number by scanning the corresponding numbers on the menu screen 2411 (2401, 2421). These pen types include home pens, recovery pens, or hospital pens such as hospital 1411.

Following the intended destination, the operator is prompted to enter numbers identifying the drug or hospital treatment to be administered to the animal (2441). Each individual drug and hospital treatment has a unique identification number. If the number entered by the operator is greater than 1000, i.e., has four digits, then the program determines that an individual drug is to be administered (2461). The identification number is then checked against a stored list to determine if it is valid (2481). The operator is alerted if the number is invalid, and he may attempt reentry (2501). Once a valid identification number has been entered, the program checks to determine if the drug requires a withdrawal date (2521). Certain drugs require that the animal be kept in the feedlot for a period of time after it is administered a drug to prevent undesired side effects to consumers. The program has stored within it the time period for each drug and calculates from the treatment data the earliest release date of the animal thereafter. If the drug has a withdrawal problem, the information is

displayed (2541) and the operator is given the opportunity to reconsider administering the drug (2561). If no withdrawal date is displayed or if the operator chooses to administer the drug in any event, the program then prompts the operator to enter the number of units to be administered (2581). The amount entered is checked against an allowable dosage range to protect the animal from an overdose. The portable unit 1611 then verifies the number of units to be administered (2601). This drug treatment data is stored within the memory of the terminal 2811 for later transfer to the computer 5011 (2621). The operator is then queried if more treatments are to be given the animal in the present treatment session (2641).

Administering and recording hospital treatments are similar to the steps followed for individual drugs. Returning to step (2461) and then referring to FIG. 49C, an entered number less than 1000, i.e., two digits, is first verified by the operator as a hospital treatment number (2661) via a scanned CR. The program then checks to see if the number entered is a valid treatment number (2681). The operator is alerted if the number is invalid (2701). If the number is valid, the program then determines if there is a withdrawal problem with this treatment (2721) and displays the appropriate information if such problem exists (2741). The operator again has the option to proceed or choose another treatment or drug (2761). The program also determines whether the treatment has a weight dependent dosage (2781). If so, the program prompts the operator to enter the animal's weight (2801), which must fall within a predetermined range to be accepted as valid. The entered weight is then verified by the operator (2821) via a scanned CR, and the program calculates and displays the dosages to be administered (2841). The operator at this point can accept or reject the treatment as calculated (2861). If accepted and administered, the amount of treatment is then stored (2881).

The operator is then prompted to determine if further drugs or treatment is to be administered to the particular animal (2901) in this treatment session. If treatment is finished, all data is then stored within the memory of the terminal 2811 and the operator proceeds to examine the next animal. Once treatment is concluded, the operator quits the program (2921).

At the conclusion of the day or other predetermined reporting period, the unit 1611 is carried to the location of the computer 5011 and the two connected by cable 5211. Referring again to FIG. 49A, the operator then initiates data transfer via the main menu of the program within the unit 1611 (2021). The appropriate commands are first selected on the host computer 5011 (1561-1601). The operator then enters a transfer command in response to a prompt (2941), and the data is transferred (2961). The transferred data is collected to update the health histories of the animals treated in that session. The updated health histories are then transferred back to the terminal 2811 for review and display in steps (2081) through (2121).

Where the "dumb" terminal is employed in place of the portable unit 1611, the instructional program illustrated in FIGS. 49A-C is stored within the memory of the host computer 5011. No recording of data for later transfer, however, is required.

IX.) Tissue Analysis

This subsection describes various process steps and system components for measuring tissue characteristics of animals. These process steps and system components can be used in conjunction with the disclosed AIF.

FIG. 50 is a block diagram, which illustrates certain components for an embodiment. FIG. 50 also illustrates certain fluid and electric interconnections between these compo-

nents. The illustrated embodiment includes switch unit 4161 and handpiece 4181. A monitor 4201 (not shown) also is used. Power source 4221 is electrically coupled to each unit requiring power. More specifically, power source 4221 is electrically coupled to control computer 4241 by cable 4261, to ultrasound computer 4281 by cable 4301, to input/output module 4321 by cable 4341, and to pump 4361 using cable 4381. Pump 4361 is controlled by pump control 4401, which is electrically coupled to a three-way solenoid valve 4421 by cable 4441. A data cable 4461 interconnects control computer 4241 and ultrasound computer 4281. FIG. 50 also illustrates that the ultrasound computer 4281 is electrically coupled to switch unit 4161 by cable 4481. Input/output module 4321 also is electrically coupled to the handpiece 4181 by cable 4501.

Pump 4361 is fluidly coupled to reservoir 4521, which contains a conductive fluid, by fluid conduit 4541. Pump 4361 is further fluidly coupled to switch unit 4161 by fluid line 4561. As shown in FIG. 50, a quick disconnect 4581 may be placed in fluid line 4561. This quick disconnect 4581 is provided solely for convenience, and allows the pump fluid line 4561 to be quickly disconnected from handpiece 4181.

Each of the individual lines, namely electric cables 4481, 4501, and fluid line 4561, are interfaced with the handpiece 4181 by switch unit 4161. Each of the components of the apparatus can be individually actuated using the switches 4601, 4621 and 4641 on switch unit 4161. Thus, by depressing the appropriate switch, each function of the apparatus can be actuated.

The components of the apparatus mentioned above will now be described in more detail. Power source 4221 is a conventional piece of equipment that can be obtained commercially. Virtually any power source now known or hereafter developed that can safely power sensitive electronic apparatuses.

Control computer 4241 also is a conventional piece of equipment, and any computer which has sufficient capability to control and interface with ultrasound computer 4281 will suffice. One example, without limitation, of a control computer 4241 suitable for this operation is an IBM PC. Control computer 4241 controls certain functions of the ultrasound computer 4281. Commercial software is available for operating the control computer 4241 to control ultrasound computer 4281. One example of software suitable for this operation is sold by Animal Ultrasound Services, Inc., of Ithaca, N.Y.

The present apparatus operates by generating and transmitting into livestock an ultrasound energy pulse. This energy pulse is produced and controlled by ultrasound computer 4281 and ultrasound transducer 4661. Each of these components can be purchased. One example of an ultrasound apparatus is an ALOKA 500 V Ultrasound Computer. The ALOKA 500 V is purchased in combination with an ultrasound transducer 4661 and transducer cable 4681 for coupling the transducer 4661 to the computer 4281.

Input/output module 4321 controls the signals input to and from computer 4241 and to the components housed in handpiece 4181. Again, the I/O module 4321 is a conventional piece of equipment, and virtually any input/output module 4321. One prototype was assembled using an OPTO 22 I/O board. The OPTO 22 I/O board includes: a 1AC5Q input module; a PB16HQ circuit board; a B1 brainboard; a PBSA PP/S power supply; and an OAC5Q output module.

A pump 4361 pumps conductive liquid to handpiece 4181. The conductive liquid is contained in reservoir 4521. Any conductive liquid likely will work. The selection of a suitable conductive liquid will best be decided by considering, inter-

alia, the conductivity of the liquid, the expense of the liquid, the availability of the liquid and the toxicity of the liquid. Solely by way of example, suitable conductive liquids may be selected from the group of conductive liquids consisting of water, vegetable oil and mineral oil. Pump 4361 is liquidly connected to conductive liquid reservoir 4521 using liquid conduit 4541, which was made from flexible TIGON tubing. A pressure equalization tube 4701, also made from TIGON tubing, couples the liquid reservoir 4521 and the pump 4361. Pressure equalization tube 4701 equalizes the pressure between the pump 4361 and the reservoir 4521 when the pump 4361 is not in operation. This helps prevent liquid leaks from reservoir 4521.

Conductive liquid is dispensed from reservoir 4521 upon actuation of the pump 4361. Liquid dispensation is controlled by a three-way solenoid valve 4421, which is electrically coupled to pump control 4401. Three-way valve 4421 can be electrically actuated by switch 4601, which is housed in switch unit 4161. This dispenses conductive liquid from reservoir 4521 through liquid conduits 4541 and 4561 to handpiece 4181. When the pump 4361 is not in use, the solenoid valve is open to pressure equalization tube 4701 to equalize the pressure between the pump 4361 and reservoir 4521. Liquid back flow from handpiece 4181 can be checked by a check valve 4721, which is mechanically coupled to the handpiece 4181.

FIG. 51 is a schematic diagram of the switch unit 4161, handpiece 4181, cables 4481, 4501, and liquid conduit 4561. FIG. 51 shows transducer 4661 separated from handpiece 4181. FIG. 51 further shows that ultrasound transducer 4661 is surrounded by a clear protective housing 4741. Housing 4741 performs at least two functions. First, housing 4741 protects ultrasound transducer 4661 from contact damage. Furthermore, protective-housing 4741 facilitates the positioning of transducer 4661 in handpiece 4181 as described below. The protective housing 4741 in a prototype illustrated in FIG. 51 was made from TIGON tubing sized to tightly receive transducer 4661 therein.

FIG. 52 is a schematic top plan view and FIG. 53 is an end view illustrating switch unit 4161. In a prototype, switch unit 4161 was made from a polypropylene block that was machined to include passages 4761 and 4781 therethrough. Conduit 4761 provides a passage through switch unit 4161 for liquid line 4561. Passage 4781 provides a passage through switch unit 4161 for electric cables 4481 and 4501. Switch unit 4161 includes three switches 4601, 4621 and 4641. The switches include conductive liquid switch 4601, trigger switch 4621 for commanding the computer to read and analyze the image, and reset switch 4641 for clearing a previous reading to prepare for rereading an animal or reading a new animal. These switches and their functions also are illustrated in FIG. 57. Switch 4601 actuates liquid pump 4361 so that conductive liquid from reservoir 4521 is pumped through liquid line 4561 and into handpiece 4181. The amount of time that pump 4361 operates is governed by a timer switch on pump 4361 (not shown). Thus, by actuating switch 4601, pump 4361 is induced to pump conductive liquid from reservoir 4521 for the period of time allowed by the timer switch on the pump. In a current prototype, the pump 4361 is actuated for a period of less than about 5 seconds, and typically about 3 seconds, during which time less than about 50 milliliters, and more typically about 30 milliliters, is pumped from reservoir 4521 to the handpiece 4181.

A second switch 4621 is electrically coupled to the ultrasound computer 4281 by cable 4481. Switch 4621 activates the computer 4281 to read and analyze the ultrasound image that is produced by transducer 4661 as displayed on monitor

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4201. Thus, once the transducer **4661** is correctly positioned, operator **4141** depresses switch **4621** to cause the computer **4281** to read the ultrasound image.

A third switch **4641** also is provided on switch unit **4161**. Switch **4641** is a reset switch electrically coupled to input/output module **4321** by cable **4501**. Switch **4641** is depressed by operator **4141** when the image has been read by computer **4281** or when the operator wants to discard a previous reading and record a new reading of a given animal's image. This can include reapplying conductive liquid from the handpiece **4181** onto the animal. This resets the computer **4241** and input/output module **4321** for receiving new information from a different animal **4101**.

FIGS. **53-55** further illustrate the construction of handpiece **4181**. FIG. **54** is a side schematic view of the housing **4181**. Housing **4181** is manufactured for this particular application, and can be manufactured from a number of suitable materials. The embodiment of a prototype illustrated in FIGS. **53-55** was manufactured from polypropylene. A block of polypropylene having suitable dimensions was obtained and then machined to have substantially the appearance illustrated in FIGS. **53-55**.

More particularly, handpiece **4181** is machined to include a threaded inlet **4801** for receiving liquid line **4561**. Any suitable means for coupling the liquid line **4561** to housing **4181** will suffice. FIGS. **53-55** illustrate a male threaded connection **4821** which is inserted into threaded portion **4841** of passage **4801** to couple liquid line **4561** to housing **4181**. Housing **4181** also is machined to include a passage **4861** for interconnecting liquid inlet **4801** and a liquid conduit **4881**. Liquid conduit **4861** is closed using a threaded plug **4901**, and liquid conduit **4881** is closed by a threaded plug **4921**.

FIG. **55** is a bottom plan view and FIG. **56** is an end view of the handpiece **4181**. FIGS. **55** and **56** illustrate a longitudinal slot **4941** recessed in the bottom surface of the handpiece **4181**. Slot **4941** is sized to receive the transducer **4661** and protective cover **4741**. If, however, the transducer **4661** and cover **4741** are not received sufficiently tightly in slot **4941** to hold the ultrasound transducer **4661** securely therein, an additional polypropylene wedge (not shown) can be used to wedge ultrasound transducer **4661** and protective cover **4741** inside the slot **4941**.

FIG. **55** also illustrates that leading to and intersecting with the conduit **4881** are plural output orifices **4961a-4961h**. These orifices **4961a-4961h** are fed by liquid line **4561**. Thus, as a conductive liquid enters the handpiece **4181** through liquid line **4561** and inlet **4801**, the conductive liquid flows through the passage **4861**, into passage **4881** and thereafter through the plural orifices **4961a-4961h** and onto animal **4101**. The spacing of these plural orifices **4961a-4961h** is not critical. The embodiment illustrated in the figures has a relative spacing of approximately one-half inch between each respective orifice **4961a-4961h**.

FIG. **55** also illustrates that the handpiece **4181** includes plural position markings **4981a-4981e**. As stated above, transducer **4661** and protective cover **4741** are positioned in slot **4941**. The transducer **4661** and cover **4741** are firmly wedged into the slot **4941** and between sidewalls **5001** and **5021**. A mid-portion of the transducer **4664** is centered on one of these respective positioning marks **4981a-4981e** depending upon the size of the animal, before the transducer is fixed in its selected position relative to end wall **5041**. More specifically, the smaller the animal, the closer transducer **4661** is positioned to end wall **5041** of slot **4941**.

The preceding paragraphs describe one embodiment of an ultrasound apparatus. This section discusses how to operate

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the apparatus, with particular reference to measuring tissue characteristics of cattle at a packing plant.

Cattle are conveyed seriatim using conveyor **5001** to a tissue analysis zone **5021** in a packing plant. As illustrated in FIGS. **58** and **59**, the ultrasound device and computer control system described above can be used to analyze the tissue characteristics of the stunned ruminant at the packing plant. With transducer **4661** transmitting continuous ultrasound signals, the operator positions handpiece **4181** on the back of the animal **5101**. The operation of the apparatus is not critically affected by the positioning of the apparatus on the back of the animal, but its positioning is important for obtaining accurate measurement data of a desired internal tissue characteristic. Transducer **4661** can be positioned between the twelfth and thirteenth rib, and typically is focused on the rib-eye muscle approximately three-quarters of the way down the muscle. Once housing **4181** is correctly positioned, the operator then actuates switch **4601** to dispense a predetermined amount of conductive liquid from reservoir **4521** onto the back of the stunned ruminant **5101**. A sufficient amount of the conductive liquid is dispensed onto the ruminant **5101** through line **4561**, passages **4861** and **4881**, and orifices **4961a-4961h** to obtain a clear image on a monitor (not shown). The amount of liquid dispensed is not critical, except that there must be enough to obtain a clear signal from the ultrasound transducer **4661**. Solely by way of example, less than about 50 milliliters, and more typically about 30 milliliters, of conductive liquid should suffice. Pump **4361** can be actuated for particular predetermined lengths of time. The pump speed also can be controlled. The combination of controlling the pump speed and liquid dispensation time allows operator **5141** to vary the amount of liquid dispensed upon animal **5101** with each actuation of switch **4601**.

Positioning the transducer **4661** is facilitated by monitoring the ultrasound tissue image on a monitor. If the monitor indicates that the transducer **4661** is not correctly positioned, the transducer **4661** can be removed from slot **4941** in the handpiece **4181** and repositioned. Once this is done for the first animal in a group of animals the transducer **4661** likely will be correctly adjusted for all animals in the group.

Once a suitable amount of conductive liquid is dispensed, which generally takes less than about 5 seconds, and more typically about 3 seconds, operator **5141** then positions transducer **4661** against the animal **5101** over the oil and between the twelfth and thirteenth rib of the animal **5101**. The transducer **4661** is held steady in this position while operator **5141** watches the monitor. Once a suitable image is obtained, operator **5141** actuates trigger switch **4621**, which is electrically coupled to the ultrasound computer **4281**. By actuating switch **4621**, ultrasound computer **4281** records the image and data, and calculates and records particular measurements of the animal **5101**. The data acquisition performed by ultrasound computer **4281** is controlled by computer **4241**. Software is commercially available for running computer **4241**. This software can determine certain tissue characteristics using the ultrasound data, which includes backfat, intramuscular marbling, muscle dimensions and the location of a fat deposit, such as the rib eye fat kernel. Thus, software can be selected to perform particular measurements on each animal, and measurement data obtained can be displayed on the monitor. If insufficient or inaccurate data is received from a reading, and if the plant processing rate provides the operator time, the animal can be remeasured. This is done by pressing reset switch **4641** and again pressing trigger switch **4621** to take a new reading.

The information obtained for each animal **5101** is downloaded into computer **4241**. The animal **5101** is continuously

conveyed by conveyor 5001 along the processing line as an operator conducts tissue analysis. Once the tissue analysis is completed, then operator 5141 moves the ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis device adjacent another stunned and bled ruminant for tissue imaging and analysis. Prior to applying the transducer 4661 to the back of the next animal, the operator actuates reset switch 4641. This clears the computer 4241 and prepares it to receive new data. The process is then repeated.

FIG. 58 illustrates that the tissue analysis can be performed by a single ultrasound operator 5141 using an ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis device as described above. FIG. 59 illustrates an alternative method for tissue imaging and analysis involving two operators. In this embodiment, the stunned and bled ruminant is conveyed to a first position adjacent a first operator. The first operator can either perform ultrasound analysis on the stunned cattle, with the second operator repeating the ultrasound measurements made by the first operator. Alternatively, the first and second operators can perform ultrasound analysis on every other cow so that operators 5141 can match the conveying speed of conveyor 5001.

Still another alternative method is to have a first operator 5141 apply an ultrasound image enhancing fluid to the animal's hide at the rib-eye portion. This animal is then conveyed to a position adjacent a second operator 5141. The second operator 5141 then performs ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis adjacent the rib-eye portion of the ruminant 5101 as the ruminant is being conveyed by conveyor 5001. The second operator 5141 adjusts the position of the ultrasound tissue analysis device until a good image is obtained. The ultrasound imaging and analysis device is then actuated to obtain and store tissue data.

The method takes less than about fifteen seconds per animal to perform, typically less than about ten seconds to perform, and more typically less than about 10 seconds to perform, and more typically about 5-7 seconds to perform. The information obtained is then used to make calculations as discussed below, and is available to both the packing plant operator and the feedlot operator in real time. This is a significant improvement over conventional methods.

Data obtained using tissue analyses on the stunned and bled ruminant can be used to perform a variety of calculations, such as those discussed in Pratt's U.S. Pat. No. 5,673,647. For example, yield and quality can be determined. The ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis device is used to make a number of measurements, including rib eye dimensions, backfat thickness and determinations of rib eye area and marbling. To make such measurements, the ultrasound device focuses on and locates particular tissue characteristics, including, for example, a particular fat deposit, such as the rib eye fat kernel. As soon as a good ultrasound tissue image is obtained, the measurements discussed above are made, and are recorded in a computer or on computer readable medium. Such data is correlated with the animals electronic identification tag, as well as information determined for each animal at the feedlot.

The data obtained by ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis at a packing plant is itself indicative of meat quality and/or yield, such as the backfat measurements, or can be used to make other calculations, such as yield grade. Yield grade is a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most lean and 5 the least lean.

Typically, cattle backfat thickness varies from about 0.1 inch to about 1.0 inch thick. Rib eye area typically varies from about 9 square inches to about 15 square inches. Yield grade is determined by considering at least rib eye area and backfat. First though, solely with respect to backfat, backfat measur-

ing greater than about 0.7 inch thick generally results in a yield grade of 4 or better. Average cattle have a backfat thickness ranging from about 0.4 inch to about 0.7 inch, and such backfat generally results in a yield grade of 3. Less backfat results in a yield grade of 1-2.

But, as stated above, yield grade also considers rib eye area. The USDA yield grade is determined by considering backfat thickness, rib eye area, hot carcass weight (which is determined by weighing both halves of a carcass about 15 minutes after initial processing) and pelvic, kidney and heart fat (PKH) values. Thus, for example, if a particular animal has a relatively small rib eye area and relatively thick backfat, then the animal likely will receive a yield grade of 4 or 5. And, if the animal has relatively large rib-eye area and relatively little backfat, then the animal likely would receive a yield grade of 1-2.

Marbling also can be determined using ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis of ruminants at packing plants. Marbling is determined by computer analysis of contrast differences in the ultrasound image. A quality grade is then assigned to the animal to reflect the marbling content. Marbling is specified as standard (which correlates with the least amount of marbling), select, choice and prime (prime correlates with the most amount of marbling).

Data collected at the packing plant is available much sooner than if conventional methods are used, such as waiting for and relying on government grading or area analyses of rib eye tracings. The present method makes such information available in real time to the packing plant operator, who could choose to provide such information virtually simultaneously to the feedlot operator. This accelerates payment all along the ruminant processing chain.

Moreover, the information provided by the method appears more objective than the grading information provided by the government grading system. And, tissue characteristics are obtained prior to processing the stunned ruminant to a carcass by, amongst other things, removing the hide and perhaps simultaneously portions of backfat. Because the present system is based on collecting and analyzing repeated tissue body measurements, it is both more reliable and correlates better with the actual yield of the stunned and bled ruminant.

And, because the information concerning each animal is available sooner and generally is more accurate and reliable than the currently used subjective grading techniques, both the feedlot and packing plant operators can make use of such information for management decisions. As used herein "management decisions" depends on whether this refers to feedlot management or packing plant management. Packing plant management decisions are discussed above, and in Pratt U.S. Pat. No. 5,673,647. "Packing plant management decisions" typically refers to, for example: (a) sorting cattle; (b) further distribution; (c) pricing for either purchase or sell; (d) classifying inventory; (e) valuing inventory; and (f) selecting feedlot suppliers. It should be realized that information provided to the feedlot operators can be used to change the subsequent treatment of individual animals at the feedlot, such as to increase or decrease feed, or to administer certain materials, such as growth factors. Because animal grading is done virtually simultaneously with processing of the animal at the packing plant using the method, cattle emerging from the carcasses emerging from the processing area can be sorted into groups based on predetermined criteria, such as customer desires, yield, quality, carcass weights, size of cuts, etc. This, along with the fact that the information is available in real time, provides the packing plant operator better information faster concerning packing plant inventory. The feedlot also can be provided the information sooner, so that feedlot man-

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agement decisions based on the information provided by the packing plant can be made much sooner and with more reliability than can be achieved using conventional methods.

This example describes a method for performing ultrasound tissue analysis of cattle in a packing plant prior to processing the cattle to carcasses. An electronic I.D. tag was placed on a trolley hook at a point where the rear leg of each animal was transferred from shackle to trolley. A portable tag reader was used to read the tag as it was placed on the hook, and this information was stored to establish the sequence of cattle on the trolley.

FIG. 60 is a schematic diagram illustrating how ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis devices were positioned in a packing plant for this procedure. Just past the transfer point for transferring the stunned animal from the shackle to the trolley, the ultrasound tissue analysis zone was defined. Vegetable oil, about 18 milliliters, was applied to the hide on the left side between the 12th and 13th ribs before each animal was conveyed to a position adjacent an ultrasound technician.

FIG. 59 illustrates two ultrasound operators **5141** performing ultrasound analysis on ruminant **10** in a packing plant. Operators **5141** are illustrated as using one embodiment of an ultrasound tissue imaging and analysis system as described in more detail above comprising a switch **5161**, and a hand piece **5181**. The two successive ultrasound operators **5141** used two identical computer/ultrasound systems, although it will be apparent that the two ultrasound systems need not be the same.

Following ultrasound measurement and prior to removing the head from the animal a portable tag reader was used to read the electronic identification tag which was removed from the ear of the animal. This electronic identification number was matched to the trolley sequence number and electronic identification tag on the trolley.

Ultrasound tissue analysis was performed on cattle processed at the packing plant. The tissue measurements made by the ultrasound device were stored with each animal's individual identification tag number, sequence number and trolley identification number in a computer.

A second I.D. in a form of an USDA-approved edible bar coded label was applied to the exposed brisket area. The edible label had a five-digit number printed thereon for visual reading, in addition to a bar code to be read by a hand-held reader immediately after the label was fixed to the brisket. The carcass was weighed at the hot scale. The packing plant's carcass tag was then fix to the carcass, and the weight was recorded along with the plant's carcass I.D. number on a tablet. The trolley I.D. and bar code label were read electronically to re-establish the sequence of cattle on the trolley in case some ruminants were railed-off by a USDA inspector for trimming and observation before being railed back in the moving chain. After all carcasses in the test left the packing plant for chilling, the hot carcass weight was linked to the ultrasound-derived data of backfat, rib eye area and marbling score in a file in a computer.

Yield grade, quality grade closely trimmed retail yield and pounds of each ruminant were calculated for each cattle processed using published formulas.

This example describes a method for grading carcasses at a packing plant where objectively measured carcass data was used rather than the normal method of visual observation by graders. Immediately after the carcasses were ribbed, a numbered paper was applied to the rib eye of the left side of the carcass. The paper was removed after the rib eye impression had been made, and was traced at a later time for determining actual rib eye area on all carcasses. Immediately after the paper was removed from the rib eye, the backfat was mea-

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sured with an approved preliminary-grade ruler. This measurement was recorded on a paper that was removed from that rib eye.

Each carcass was graded by a grader employing official procedures of the USDA meat grading service, and stamped accordingly with yield and quality grades. A second person from the USDA meat grading service observed the carcass as trained and then observed a computer screen displaying the yield and quality grades as calculated on day of slaughter by the ultrasound derived data plus the hot carcass weight. If the USDA grader agreed with the calculated value, he pressed the touch screen computer and a label was printed and fixed to the carcass by another worker to confirm the calculated values. If the USDA grader did not agree, he adjusted PYG, RIB EYE, and/or KPH to change the calculated yield grade and marbling score to change the quality grade. When the displayed yield grade and quality grade matched the USDA grader's evaluation, he pressed a print button on the touch screen computer and a label was printed and fixed to the carcass.

A second touch screen computer was made available to the plant grader. He could observe the carcass and compare his subjective value to that displayed on the screen. He could then make changes to PYG, KPH and rib eye to adjust the yield grade and marbling score to adjust the quality grade.

Every thirtieth carcass was railed off for measuring PYG with the official ruler and rib eye using an official grid device. Three people, two USDA meat-grading graders and one IBP selected grader, independently measured each carcass railed off. The three independent measurements were averaged to establish the official reference measurements.

The results from the examples demonstrate that tissue analysis made on ruminants in packing plants can provide yield grades, rib eye areas and marbling, for example, that correlate well with those obtained by the conventional processes. Moreover, the data provided by the tissue analysis at the packing plant is available in real time for analysis by the packing plant, the feedlot, and others in the processing line. This not only expedites payment to all persons in the processing line, but further also allows the feedlot to adjust its methods of processing ruminants, and allows the packing plant operators to better control their inventory.

X.) Feed Delivery 1

This subsection describes various process steps and system components for delivering feed to animals. These process steps and system components can be used in conjunction with the disclosed AIF.

The microingredient feed additive concentrates include such potent substances as hormones, antibiotics, and vitamins that are typically administered to cattle and poultry at feeding operations, such as cattle feedlots, in gram amounts or less. It is often essential that a prescribed amount of a microingredient be delivered to an animal, and no more. Too little of a microingredient has no effect, while too much of it may be toxic or fatal. The range between too much or too little of some additives is often no more than 0.5 gram. The apparatus and method disclosed in this detailed description is intended to accurately dispense dry and liquid additive concentrates within this range of accuracy.

With reference to the drawings, FIG. 61 illustrates an apparatus shown generally at **1013** for measuring, dispensing, and delivering microingredient feed additive concentrates in small but accurate proportions in a liquid carrier slurry to livestock shortly before delivery of the feed ration to the animals for consumption. The apparatus **1013** includes several separate components including a main cabinet **1113**, and a remote control unit **2013**, shown for convenience near cabinet **1113** but normally located at a remote control station such

as at a feed truck filling station in a feedlot. Additional separate components include multiple liquid additive concentrate storage containers 7613, 7813 (only one being shown in FIG. 61) supported on a stand 7913, and their dispensing pumps 7913 (see FIG. 62). Typically, a separate water supply tank 1953 (FIG. 64) supplies the necessary carrier and flush water to the cabinet through fill and flush conduits (FIG. 10), via a booster pump 1933 (FIG. 64).

Another separate cabinet (not shown) houses a weigh micro computer, or central processing unit, shown schematically at 4243 in FIG. 64. A second microcomputer, or central processing unit, shown schematically at 4303 in FIG. 64, for controlling the machine sequencing and volumetric metering functions, is housed within one end portion 1313 of cabinet 1113. Various speed controls and electrical relay interfaces and circuitry of the control system shown in FIG. 64 are also housed within cabinet end portion 1313. Such end portion is a separate compartment of cabinet 1113 that can be swung open about a hinged vertical axis for access.

Cabinet 1113 houses the major mechanical components of the apparatus. The exterior of the cabinet, with its protective panels 1213, completely encloses and shields such components from external dust, dirt and other contaminants common in a feedlot environment. The panels also protect the internal components, especially the weight-sensitive ones, from external forces such as wind, jarring contact, and the like, that would otherwise affect the accuracy of weight measurements.

Referring to FIG. 64 showing the major components inside the cabinet 1113, such components include a main frame 4613 and an entirely separate and independently mounted subframe 3413, each mounting certain components. Access to the components mounted on these frames is gained through access doors 1513, 1713, 1913 in a front wall of the cabinet 1113, and through hinged lids 1613, 1813 on a top wall of the cabinet.

In general, weigh subframe 3413 mounts those components which are necessary to the weighing function of the apparatus, and main frame 4613 mounts the remaining components that could, during their operation, induce undesirable movements in the weigh components to adversely affect the weighing function. Accordingly, the weigh subframe serves as a means for isolating the weight components from internal machine movements induced through operation of components on the main frame.

The main frame components include storage bins 6813, 7013, 7213, 7413 for storing different dry additive concentrates, dry additive dispensing means 8013 for dispensing additives from the storage bins, and an additive-receiving means comprising a mixing vessel or tank 1703. Other main frame-mounted components include a discharge pump 2443 for pumping slurry from mixing vessel 1703, slurry mixers 1803, and various plumbing components for supplying carrier and flush water to the mixing vessel and discharging slurry liquid from the vessel. Cabinet lids 1613, 1813 provide access to the storage bins for refilling them.

The subframe 3413 includes an entire subassembly of weigh components, including a weigh hopper means comprising the compartmented weigh hopper 1223, and a suspension means for suspending the weigh hopper from a weighing means 2503. The suspension means includes a pair of suspension frames 1233, one at either end of the weigh hopper. Each such frame rotatably supports weigh hopper 1223. Each suspension frame 1233 includes a suspension arm 2703 suspending the suspension frame from the weigh means 2503. The weigh means includes, at each end of the subframe 3413, a weigh tower 2523 projecting upwardly from the subframe

and suspending therein a load cell 2643. The load cell in turn suspends the weigh hopper through an appropriate connection to suspension arm 2703 of suspension frame 1233.

Remote control unit 2013 includes a computer terminal 2213 supported on a stand 3013 having a base plate 3213. Terminal 2213 includes a primary keyboard 2413, a primary display screen 2613, a small, secondary keyboard 2713 and a small, secondary display screen 2913. Various control switches and indicators are provided on a control switch box 2813 mounted on a shelf 3113 of the stand below the terminal 2213.

Apparatus 1013 is seen therein and in FIG. 65 to comprise a weigh frame 3413 having four uprights 3613 and two each of parallel crossbeams 3813, 4013 and longitudinal beams 3713, 3913 rigidly interconnecting the four uprights 3613. A vertical slat 4113, 4313 is carried between each pair of beams 3713, 3913. Each of uprights 3613 has an enlarged foot 4213 to enhance the stability of weigh frame 3413. Each foot 4213 is mounted on an elastomeric isolation pad 4413 (FIG. 63) which absorbs vibrations or other environmental influences that may affect the accuracy of the functions performed by weigh frame 3413. Each pad 4413 includes a square upper plate 4513 to which foot 4213 is secured, the upper plate having a peripheral, downwardly depending flange which forms an enclosure. A square lower plate 4713 is attached to a floor with bolts below plate 4513 and has a peripheral, upwardly extending flange that forms an enclosure. A rubber cushion 4813 is placed between plates 4513, 4713 within the enclosures formed by the flanges on the plates. Cushion 4813 is thick enough to maintain the upwardly and downwardly extending flanges in spaced relationship so that vibrations are not communicated between plates 4513, 5713.

Separate mounting or main frame 4613 substantially surrounds weigh frame 3413, the mounting frame 4613 comprising four uprights 4913 interconnected by four top support beams 5013 and four bottom support beams 5213. Two intermediate parallel support beams 5113, 5313 extend across opposing parallel faces of frame 4613, and two parallel support beams 5413, 5513 extend across the middle of frame 4613 parallel to beams 5113, 5313. A pair of parallel, U-shaped brackets 56, 57 are fixed to and suspend from beams 5113, 5413 (FIG. 68), and a pair of similar U-shaped brackets are fixed to and suspend from beams 5313, 5513. Only one U-shaped bracket 5913 is shown in FIG. 64, although it will be understood that a second, parallel U-shaped bracket extends between beams 5313, 5513 in an arrangement similar to that shown in FIG. 68 for U-shaped brackets 5613, 5713.

Mounting frame 4613 is supported by casters 5813 each having a roller 6013 that is received within a cup 6213 that is attached to an isolation pad 6413 which is similar in structure to pad 4413 shown in FIG. 63. Pad 6413 comprises a top plate 6513 having a peripheral, downwardly depending flange and a bottom plate 6613 bolted to the floor and having a peripheral, upwardly extending flange. A rubber cushion 6713 is positioned between plates 6513, 6613 within the enclosures formed by their peripheral flanges, the width of cushion 6713 being great enough to keep the peripheral flanges in spaced relationship to one another and avoid metal to metal contact which might transfer vibrations.

Figs. 62 and 64 show multiple storage means such as dry additive concentrate storage bins 6813, 7013, 7213, and 7413 for storing separately a plurality of different dry microingredient feed additive concentrates. Each of the bins has a square top opening and square bottom opening, the bottom opening having a smaller area than the top opening such that the cross-sectional area of each bin diminishes in the direction of

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the bottom opening. A pair of vibrator motors 7513, 7713 (FIG. 64) are placed on each bin 6813-7213 to assist in moving dry microingredient concentrates out of the bins during dispensing.

A plurality of liquid containers 7613, 7813 are also shown in FIG. 62 for storing separately different liquid microingredient feed additive concentrates. The liquid containers are supported on a table 7913 (FIG. 61) adjacent cabinet 1113 and connected to the apparatus through flexible tubes described later.

A separate dry dispensing means 8013 is provided for each dry bin 6813-7413. A separate liquid dispensing means 1203 is provided for each liquid container 7613-7813. Each liquid and dry dispensing means is independently operated and controlled for dispensing separately several selected additive concentrates from their respective bins and liquid containers in predetermined weights during a machine operating cycle.

One of the dry dispensing means 8013 for a dry microingredient is shown best in FIGS. 64 and 68. It includes an annular collar 8213 having a square cross section. The collar fits closely about the open bottom of a bin 6813-7413 and extends partially up its sidewalls. Collar 8213 has a square frusto-pyramidal configuration which defines a flow passage-way of progressively decreasing cross section from the bottom bin opening to a top opening into a coreless metering screw assembly 8413 within a rectangular lower extension section 8613 of collar 8213 having a curved bottom. Screw assembly 8413 includes a rotatable core 8813 which carries a helical metal screw 9013 and rectangular screw agitator 9213 with a circular band 9413 around one end thereof. A stationary rear one-half tube extension 9613 of a conveyor tube 1083 projects into the interior of agitator 9213 to start the conveyance of material that is moved by the screw 9013 into conveyor tube 1083. Agitator 9213 helps maintain a uniform microingredient density around rotating screw 9013.

Agitator 9213 is rotated by a shaft 1003 which is driven through a right-angle gear box 1043 by a variable-speed motor 1023, with three pre-set speeds. Core 8813 and screw 9013 project through opening 1063 and into conveyor tube 1083 having an open end that terminates adjacent a deflection plate 1103 above the top opening of weigh hopper 1223. Thus the metering screw assembly conveys additive from the supply bin into a compartment of the weigh hopper.

Each of liquid containers 7613, 7813 is provided with a separate dispensing means 1203. Each liquid dispensing means is, for example, a variable-speed or displacement rotary or piston pump 7913 (FIG. 62). The liquid dispensing means pumps liquid additive from a container 7613, 7813 through a flexible feed conduit which connects to a rigid dispensing tube end 1203 (FIG. 65) on the weigh subframe to deliver the additive into a liquid compartment 1173-1183 of weigh hopper 1223.

The hopper 1223 (FIGS. 62, 64, 65, and 67) is carried by weigh subframe 3413 between frame slats 4113, 4313 below the open end of extension tube 1083 of screw conveyor 8013. Hopper 1223 is an elongated trough having a substantially semicylindrical cross section and a plurality of partitions 1123 which divide the hopper transversely into several dry microingredient receiving compartments 1133, 1143, 1153, 1163. Each of the dry compartments 1133-1163 is provided with a deflector 1323 on its partition wall having a triangular cross section that directs additive concentrates to the interior of the compartments during both filling and emptying of the hopper.

Additional partitions 1113 of hopper 1223 cooperate with some partitions 1123 and upper walls 1283 to define liquid additive-receiving compartments 1173, 1183 having narrow

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openings 1303 into which liquid dispensing tubes 1203 direct liquid additives from containers 7613, 7813.

The liquid and dry additive compartments of hopper 1223 maintain dispensed additives separated until the hopper discharges its contents, after weighing, into the diluting liquid carrier within the mixing vessel 1703 positioned vertically below the hopper.

Hopper 1223 is supported by weigh frame 3413 such that it is free to rotate about its longitudinal axis. Each semicircular end plate 1343 (one being shown in FIG. 67) of hopper 1223 is secured to a shaft 1363 at the hopper end shown in FIG. 67 is drivingly connected to a motor 1383 that is fixed to hopper suspension frame 1233 by a mounting bracket 2733. The shaft at the opposite end of the hopper is mounted in a bearing 1403 (FIG. 64). Motor 1383 operates first to rotate hopper 1223 to an inverted position for emptying (FIG. 71); then to an upright position (in the same direction) for the next dispensing and weighing cycle.

An air flush means for compartments 1133-1163 of hopper 1223 is shown in FIG. 71. The air flush means is carried by the main frame and comprises a compressor 1423 in fluid communication through passageway 1443 with air pressure accumulator tank 1463. A solenoid valve 1493 regulates the flow of air through passageway 1483 to header 1503. The header in turn fluidly communicates with a plurality of hoses 1523 that project into each compartment 1133-1163 of hopper 1223 when the hopper is inverted. Each of hoses 1523 is positioned to direct a stream of air against far wall 1543 of the hopper. It is not necessary to direct the air stream against near wall 1563 because that wall will have already been scraped relatively clean by the movement of dry additives against the wall and out of the hopper as hopper 1223 rotates to an inverted position.

A vibrator motor 1413 is carried by suspension frame 1233 at the end of hopper 1223 opposite hopper rotating motor 1383. Vibrator motor 1413 operates during inversion of the hopper to promote emptying of the hopper compartments by vibrating the hopper.

An elongated mixing vessel 1703 which serves as a receiving means for receiving additives from the hopper 1223 and also as a mixing means for mixing such additives with water, is placed below hopper 1223. Vessel 1703 is an elongated tub that is longer and wider than hopper 1223. Vessel 1703 comprises a continuous, annular upright wall 1723 around a sloping bottom formed from a plurality of triangular sections 1763 that slope towards a pair of central bottom openings including an inlet port 1773 and discharge port 1783.

Variable speed flow inducing means, such as variable two-speed mixers 1803, serve as part of the mixing means and are provided in mixing vessel 1703 for inducing a turbulent flow of liquid within the mixing vessel. Each mixer 1803 is comprised of four angled mixing blades 1823 connected to the end of a rotary mixing shaft 1843 that is connected to a gearbox 1863 and motor 1883 for rotating shaft 1843. Each of motors 1883 is mounted on a motor mounting frame 1903 along an outside face of vessel wall 1723. Level sensors 1923, 1943 are also mounted over the edges of wall 1723 and project downwardly into the tub for determining the level of water contained therein and shutting off a supply of water to the tub when a predetermined level is reached. Sensors 1923, 1943 are, for example, electrodes through which an electrical circuit is completed or a timing circuit energized when the water surface in the tub reaches the predetermined level. Sensor 1923 is the primary sensor, while sensor 1943 is a backup sensor which detects a near overflow condition, closes fill solenoid 2063, and interrupts the fill cycle.

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FIG. 70 shows a plumbing system for apparatus 1013 which delivers and removes carrier and flush water from vessel 1703. Water is introduced from a source 1953 by pump 1933 through line 1943 where its pressure is detected by pressure gauge 1963. Water then continues to flow through line 1983 where it is divided by tee 2003 into water lines 2023, 2043. The flow of water through fill line 2043 is controlled by solenoid valve 2063 which, when open, allows water to flow through line 2083, thence to conduit 2103 and into vessel 1703 through port 1773. When solenoid valve 2063 is open, a second solenoid valve 2123 in line 2023 remains closed such that all of the supply of water moves through line 2043 to fill vessel 1703.

Solenoid valve 2123 is interposed between line 2023 and flush line 2143 that in turn communicates with line 2163 to establish fluid communication with conduit 2103. Line 2143 also fluidly communicates with line 2183 having branches 2203, 2223. Branch 2203 fluidly communicates with a pair of nozzles 2243, one positioned above blades 1823 of each mixer 1803, nozzle 2243 directing a flow of water onto the blades to clean them. Line 2223 provides a passageway through which the water moves to flush ring 2263 (FIGS. 69 and 70) which is positioned around the upper inner periphery of vessel 1703 adjacent its top edge. Ring 2263 has a number of flush nozzles 2283 which direct a flow of water downwardly against wall 1723 of vessel 1703 to flush it.

Apparatus 1013 also has a delivery means for delivering slurry from vessel 1703 to a receiving station for mixing with an animal feed ration at a location remote from the mixing vessel. This delivery means includes discharge opening 1783 in fluid communication with conduit 2403 that empties into discharge line 2423. Discharge pump 2443 withdraws slurry through line 2423 and sends it through line 2463 to receiving station 2483 where, typically, it is sprayed into a livestock feed ration and mixed therewith.

A weighing means 2503 (FIG. 66) is provided on weigh frame 3413 for weighing predetermined weights of the different additive concentrates dispensed from bins 6813-7413 and containers 7613, 7813. Weighing means 2503 includes a weigh tower 2523 extending vertically upward from a cross-beam 4013 of weigh frame 3413 midway between uprights 3613 at each end of frame 3413. Each tower 2523 has a flat top plate 2543 with a central opening through which the threaded shank of an eye member 2563 is placed and secured with a nut. A rubber pad 2583 is placed against the interior face of plate 2543 before member 2563 is secured to top plate 2543 with the nut. A pair of suspension members 2603 pivotally interconnect eye member 2563 and a second eye member 2623 from which a load cell 2643 is suspended. The amount of strain on load cell 2643 is communicated to a control unit through line 2653. The load cell 2643 in the preferred embodiment is capable of weighing to an accuracy of 0.5 grams.

A rubber isolator pad 2663 is pivotally suspended beneath load cell 2643 by suspension members 2683. A suspension arm 2703 of the hopper suspension frame 1233 is in turn suspended from isolation pad 2663 by hook 2723 and eye 2743 secured to arm 2703. Arms 2703 of suspension frames 1233 thus suspend hopper 1223 such that the entire weight of the hopper is freely suspended from load cells 2643. Arms 2703 are braced by gussets 2713 to their rectangular weigh frames 1233. Hopper 1223 is suspended interior to frames 1233 between slats 4113, 4313 of frame 3413 by suspending shafts 1363, one of which is driven (FIG. 67) and the other of which is mounted in a bearing 1403 (FIG. 64). The hopper is therefore free to rotate between frames 1233 to an inverted position. This arrangement allows the weight of the hopper to

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be transferred through frames 1233 to arms 2703 for acting on load cells 2643. The weight of additive concentrates in hopper means 1223 can therefore be accurately determined.

As best shown in FIG. 67, a transverse vibration and sway dampening rod 2763 extends between a bracket 2783 carried by an upright of hopper suspension frame 1233 and a bracket 2793 carried by two longitudinal beams 3713, 3913 of weigh frame 3413. Such a rod 2763 is provided at each end of weigh frame 3413 adjacent face 1343 of hopper 1223 for preventing or damping transverse movements of the hopper. A similar longitudinal rod (not shown) extends along one longitudinal side of hopper 1223 to prevent or dampen longitudinal vibratory or swaying movements of hopper 1223, one end of the longitudinal rod being fixed to longitudinal beam 3913 and the other end being fixed to weigh frame 3413. Such sway dampening rods provide part of the means isolating the weight-sensitive components of the apparatus from movements that could affect accurate weight measurements.

Apparatus 1013 is provided with a control means, such as a central processing unit, for controlling the operation of apparatus 1013. In the preferred embodiment, two-programmed central processing units are used, one for operating the weighing functions of apparatus 1013 and the other for operating all other machine functions.

The logic of the program for operating the weighing functions of the machine is shown in FIG. 72. The weighing CPU is activated by starting the menu at 2803 and then entering ration data with keyboard 2413 for a particular feedlot or data for one of a series of desired batches at a feedlot. The formulation of each desired batch has been preprogrammed into the computer such that a batch formulation can be chosen by entering a code number at 2823. The computer then searches at 2843 for a match to this encoded formulation until the match is found and the machine is ready to batch. If a match is not found, the program at 2853 returns to step 2803 and a prompt is sent to screen 2613 to enter ration data.

Once a match is found at 2843, a program prompt at 2863 appears on screen 2613 requesting the size of the batch to be prepared. After this information is entered, the program prompt at 2873 requests the number of batches to be prepared, and if the batch size exceeds the capacity of the preprogrammed limit for the feed lot ration mixer or the compartments 1133-1183 of hopper 1223, this is computed at 2883. If capacity has been exceeded, a prompt is sent to screen 2613 at box 2893, and the program will request that new data concerning batch size and number be entered by returning to step 2863. If capacity has not been exceeded, the machine is ready to batch at 2903.

The weighing computer first checks to determine if a weigh switch is on at 2923, and if the weigh switch is off, an alarm is sounded at step 2933 and the program returns to ready at 2903. The alarm will alert an operator that the weighing switch must be turned on in order for batching to continue.

The program next calculates metering ration data at 2943 and sends it to the machine operating program at 2953 as indicated by A in FIGS. 72 and 73. The metering data is calculated for any additives that have been selected for dispensing in the metering mode during the weigh cycle. Dispensing a portion of the additives by volume is more fully set forth in connection with steps 3613-3633 of FIG. 73 below.

The program then sets an output for the water level at 2963, the level of the water determining how much fluid carrier will be present in the slurry which is ultimately delivered to receiving station 2483. Water level information is sent to the machine operating program at 2973, as indicated by B in FIGS. 72 and 73. The program next waits at 2983 for a start signal which the operator gives by activating start switch

2993 on switch panel 2813. The weighing cycle is then started at 3003 by sending a start signal at 3013 to the machine operating program as indicated by C in FIGS. 72 and 73. Even though the weighing cycle has started, no weighing of micro-ingredients actually commences until a signal is received back from the machine operating program at 3023 as indicated by D in FIGS. 72 and 73 that indicates weighing should begin at 3043. This communication between the programs at D enables the machine operating program to begin its initial checks while microingredients are being dispensed and weighed.

Once the signal to begin weighing is received at 3043, the weighing sequence begins at 3063. It is first determined at 3083 whether a motion sensor is detecting movement of hopper means 1223. Information is received from the motion sensor on the hopper at 3093, as indicated by E in FIGS. 72 and 73. The program will not progress beyond 3083 until the motion sensor indicates that hopper means 1223 is not moving, since movement of the hopper means will adversely affect weight determinations of load cell 2643. Hopper means 1223 can be put in motion by a variety of influences, such as wind gusts, floor vibration, personnel contact, or movement of machine parts. Although the effect of these movements on load cell 2643 may not be great, the extreme accuracy required in dispensing microingredient feed additive concentrates makes absence of movement desirable.

It is next determined at 3103 whether the scale reading is less than 1000 grams. If the reading is greater than 1000 grams, it is probably because the hopper means is not empty, as indicated at 3113, and a signal is sent at 3123, 3133 to dump hopper means 1223 so that weighing of a new lot of micro-ingredients can begin. The signal to dump is sent to the machine operating program as indicated at step 3143 and F in FIGS. 72 and 73. The mixers 1823 are also started at 3153 as indicated by G in FIGS. 72 and 73 so that the microingredients dumped from hopper means 1223 will be mixed into a slurry and discharged to receiving station 2483 in accordance with normal operation of the machine operating program described in connection with FIG. 73 below.

If the scale reading is less than 1000 grams, it is determined at 3163 if the scale reads below zero. If that is the case, a message is given to the operator by 3173 on screen 2613 that the scale has failed and the supervisor should be called. Then at 3183 the program prompts the operator to switch to a backup metering mode system which dispenses additive concentrates by volume instead of by weight, and a prompt is sent at 3193 to screen 2613 directing that the weigh switch 3213 at panel 2813 be turned off. The operator then performs as outlined in FIG. 75 by turning the meter switch on at step 5003 and entering ration data at 5023. Volumetric metering of additive concentrates is performed by activating motor 1023 of each bin 6813-7413 to rotate screw 9013 for a predetermined period of time. Since screw 9013 will dispense an approximate known amount of concentrate per unit of time, a volumetric approximation of the desired amount of concentrate can be dispensed without weighing.

If the scale reads above zero at 3163, the weighing mode of the program is instead used. Ingredient flow is started at 3203 by activating motor 1023 for screw 9013 below bin 6813. Motor 1023 has at least two speeds so that it initially operates at a higher speed during the initial phase of dispensing additive concentrates from bin 6813 into a first compartment 1133 of hopper means 1223. The weight of concentrate introduced into compartment 1133 is sensed by load cell 2643 and that information is continually fed back to the computer through line 2653. As the weight of concentrate dispensed from bin 6813 approaches the predetermined amount of that concen-

trate for the batch formulation chosen at 2823, motor 1223 is switched to a lower speed at 3223 and 3243 that more slowly dispenses the concentrate from bin 6813 during a final phase of dispensing. In this manner, a more accurate weight of microingredient can be dispensed from bin 6813 into compartment 1133 since the dispensing of additive will have slowed before it is finally stopped when the correct weight of this first concentrate is sensed at 3263.

The program contains a weight compensation step at 3283. It sometimes happens that the actual weight of additive concentrate dispensed by dispensing means 8013 into compartment 1133 will be slightly greater or less than the desired weight set by the ration data at 2823. The program compensates for such inaccuracies by adding or subtracting a weight compensation factor to the ration amount set for the additive concentrate at 2823. In this manner, the weight inaccuracy will be corrected the next time a microingredient additive is dispensed from bin 6813 into compartment 1133.

When the predetermined weight of microingredient additive concentrate is sensed at 3263 and the weighing of that component has been completed, the computer determines if the just dispensed concentrate was the last microingredient dispensed at 3303. Assuming the microingredient concentrate in bin 6813 was not the only concentrate to be dispensed in this formulation, the program then returns to box 3203, and the flow of ingredients from bin 7013 is initiated by activating motor 1023 beneath bin 7013 to turn screw 9013 at a fast speed and begin moving microingredient additive from bin 7013 into compartment 1143 of hopper means 1223. Load cell 2643 continues to sense the weight of concentrate added to hopper means 1223 from bin 7013 until that weight begins to approach the final predetermined weight desired of the second concentrate. This predetermined weight will be the total actual net weights of the first additive concentrate plus the predetermined weight of the second additive concentrate since hopper means 1223 has not yet inverted and the first additive concentrate still remains in compartment 1133. As the total combined actual weight of additive concentrate in compartments 1133, 1143 approaches the predetermined amount, motor 1023 is switched to a slower speed, and additive concentrate is continued to be slowly dispensed with screw 9013 from bin 7013 until the total combined weight of additive concentrate is reached, and motor 1203 is shut off.

This same procedure is repeated until the predetermined weight of additive from each of bins 7213, 7413 is similarly dispensed into compartments 1153, 1163. Liquid microingredient additive concentrates from containers 7613 and 7813 are dispensed by activation of a liquid pump which sequentially dispenses liquid additive from containers 7613, 7813 into liquid receiving compartments 1173, 1183 of hopper means 1223 until a predetermined amount of each liquid additive has been dispensed.

Once the last additive has been dispensed, as determined at 3303, the computer determines that weighing has been completed at 3323, which sends at 3343 a signal to the machine sequence program as indicated by H in FIGS. 72 and 73. The computer pauses at 3363 to wait on discharge of hopper means 1223. Once dumping of hopper means 1223 has been completed by inversion of the hopper and its return to an upright position, this information is sent from the machine operating program of FIG. 73 to the weighing program of FIG. 72 as shown at I and 3383. It is then determined at 3403 whether another batch of microingredient is required. If not, the program returns from 3423 to its starting point at 2803. If another batch is required, the program returns to box 2923 and the sequence repeats itself as described above.

Although not shown in FIG. 72, the weigh program can be modified to keep a running inventory of additive concentrates. This can be accomplished by entering into the weigh computer the weight of additive concentrate placed in each of bins 6813-7413 and containers 7613, 7813. The weight of each concentrate actually dispensed and sensed by load cells 2643 is then subtracted from the original weight of concentrate to determine the inventory of concentrate remaining.

The control means can also be programmed to perform other functions that enhance the accuracy of weight determinations by the weighing means. For example, the isolating means can include programming the control means to prevent acceptance of the measured weight by the control means following operation of dispensing means 8013 until motion of hopper means 1223 sensed by motion sensors has subsided to a level that will not affect load cells 2643. The same result can be achieved by programming the control means to delay operation of all other movable machine components (such as dispensing means 8013, 1203 or mixers 1823) for a predetermined period of time sufficient for hopper 1223 to settle or until any oscillatory movements subside. Alternatively, the isolating means can include programming the control means to prevent operation of moving components (such as dispensing means 8013, 1203 or mixers 1823) while weight determinations are being made by the load cells 2643.

FIG. 73 schematically illustrates the logic of a program for actuating the sequence of operations of apparatus 1013. The program begins by determining at 3443 if the weigh switch on switch panel 2813 has been turned on. Once the weigh switch is on, the program is ready for a metering data signal at 3453. It waits at 3463 until the metering ration data is received at 3463 from steps 3473 and 2953 as indicated by A.

Once the metering data is received, the program is ready to batch at 3483. It receives water level data at 3493 from 3503 and 2973 as indicated by B. The start signal from 3013 is then relayed via C to 3513 and 3523. The machine cycle is then started at 3533, and initiation of the cycle is signaled to the weighing program from 3543 through D to 3023.

Boost pump 1933 is then turned on at 3553 for introducing water through line 1943 in FIG. 70 with solenoid 2063 open and solenoid 2123 closed. It is determined at step 3553 if the boost pump is on, and if it is not, an alarm is sounded at 3563 that the pump is switched off. Boost pump 1933 introduces water through line 2083, conduit 2103, and port 1773 until a predetermined water level set at 2943 is sensed by level probe 1923. If the predetermined water level is not reached within a set period of time as indicated by 3573, an alarm sounds at 3583 to indicate that an error has occurred. Otherwise, if mixing vessel 1703 fills within the set time, this condition is detected by level probe 1923 and mixing blade motors 1883 are activated at 3593 on a slow speed to cause the water in mixing vessel 1703 to flow. If the motors 1883 do not turn on, an alarm is given at 3603 to alert the operator of this malfunction.

It is possible to accurately dispense some liquid microingredient additives such as those in containers 7413, 7613 by volumetric metering instead of weighing. Such accurate volumetric metering is possible since the density of most liquids is quite constant over the range of environmental conditions in which apparatus 1013 is used. Volumetric metering of liquid additives selected by the metering ration data is achieved at 3613 by activating the piston pump in dispensing means 1203 for a period of time determined by 3623, 3633. Once the metering step is completed, the dumping mechanism is enabled at 3643 for proceeding to weigh complete step 3653 before inverting hopper 1223.

The program waits at step 3653 for the weighing sequence shown in FIG. 72 step 3203 through step 3343 to be complete. Once the weighing sequence is completed at step 3343, a signal is sent to 3653 through 3663 at H from the weigh program, and the sequence program progresses to 3673 where a signal is given at 3683 from 3143 via F to actuate motor 1383 and invert hopper means 1223 to dispense the additive concentrates contained in compartments 1133-1183 separately but simultaneously into the flowing water of vessel 1703. The dumping mechanism is disabled at 3693 once the hopper leaves its upright position. Once hopper means 1223 is inverted at 3703, vibrators on the hopper are activated at step 3723 to promote complete removal of all microingredient particles from bins 1133-1183. Compressor 1423 is next actuated at 3733 to compress air in air tank 1463, and a solenoid to header 1503 is opened which moves a flow of air through hoses 1523 and toward wall 1543 of each of compartments 1133-1163 to remove any traces of solid additive concentrates from the compartments. Air flushing continues for a predetermined period of time at step 3733.

Hopper means 1223 is then sent to its home position at step 3743 by activating hopper motor 1383 to continue to turn shaft 1363 in the same direction it turned to invert the hopper. When the hopper returns to its upright position, this is sensed by a switch as indicated by step 3753, and a signal is sent at 3763, 3773 to 3383 through I that the contents of hopper means 1223 have been dumped, and another weigh cycle (FIG. 72) can begin. Meanwhile the machine operating program of FIG. 73 progresses to step 3783 which switches motors 1883 of mixers 1803 to a higher speed. The lower motor speed is used until hopper means 1223 leaves its inverted position since high speed mixing while the hopper is inverted could cause water drops to be splashed into containers 1133-1163. Step 3783 also begins to measure a predetermined mixing time. When the period for the preselected mixing time expires, as determined at 3803, the mixing motors 1883 are switched back to their lower speed. Once the weighing program receives a discharge signal at 3813 from step 3153 through G and 3823, or alternatively from actuation of a discharge switch 3833 on switch panel 2813, a discharge signal is sent by the program at 3843 to discharge the slurry in vessel 1703. A solenoid valve in line 2403 then opens, and pump 2443 (FIG. 70) is activated to remove the slurry through outlet 1783 in vessel 1703. Mixer blades 1823 continue turning at a slow speed until a predetermined period of time expires, as set by step 3853. Pump 2443 continues operating as the water level lowers and finally clears the bottom of probe 1923, as illustrated by step 3863. If the level probe is not cleared within a predetermined period of time, an alarm is given at 3873 to indicate a pumping malfunction.

After the water level clears the bottom of probe 1923, pump 2443 continues operating and a timed flush cycle begins at 3883. Boost pump 1933 is activated at 3893 for introducing water through line 1943 as solenoid 2063 is closed and solenoid 2123 is opened. In this manner, flush water is introduced through line 2143 so that it enters vessel 1703 through nozzles 2283 of flush ring 2263, blade flush nozzles 2243, and port 1773. The interior of vessel 1703 and the surfaces of blades 1823 are thereby flushed, completely removing any residue of microingredient additives from the vessel through inlet 1793. The boost pump continues introducing a water flush into vessel 1703 until the flush time period expires at 3903, and the flush is terminated at 3913. Discharge pump 2443 continues pumping for a delay period following the end of the flush cycle, as shown at 3923; then discharge pump 2443 is turned off at 3933.

The program then determines if the weigh switch is still on at 3943 and if it is, the program returns to step 3443 to repeat the sequence described in steps 3443-3933. If the weigh switch has been turned off, the apparatus 1013 is turned off at 3953 and an alarm is given at 3963 to indicate that a mode change has been made.

The control means includes means for operating mixers 1803 and discharge pump 2443 at the same time as dispensing means 8013 such that a first batch of additive concentrate slurry can be mixed and delivered to a receiving station while a second batch of additive concentrates are dispensed and weighed prior to their deposit into the mixing vessel.

A schematic diagram of the electrical connections for apparatus 1013 is shown in FIG. 74.

It is important to the proper operation of a computer that it be supplied with electrical power of a constant and consistent quality. This is a serious drawback in rural areas where the electrical power being supplied is often at the end of a long supply line into which fluctuations are introduced by intervening power users. Most cattle yards and other users of apparatus 1013 are located in rural areas where variations in power would adversely affect operation of the computers which control weighing and sequencing of machine function. For that reason, the system employs a series of transformers to selectively filter the electrical energy, isolate the power source, and damp variations in the power before it is supplied to the computers.

Four hundred eighty volts of power are supplied at 4003 by a rural electrical utility, and that power first passes through 10 kw isolation transformer 4023 where it is transformed into 240 V power, illustrated by 4043 in FIG. 74. This initially filtered 240 V power is supplied to electrical connection line 4053 through relay 4063 to booster pump 1933 that introduces water into mixing tank 1703 during the filling and flushing cycles. The 240 V power is also supplied through relay 4073 to pump 2443 that helps drain the mixing tank. This relatively unfiltered power can be supplied to pumps 1933, 2443 since they are not as sensitive to power variations as the computers.

The 240 V power is also sent to a sola-regulating transformer 4083 where it is transformed to 120 V power, as illustrated at 4093. This filtered, 120 V power is used to provide electrical energy to all components of apparatus 1013 other than pumps 1953, 2443. If electrical energy is interrupted, three 12 V batteries 4103 connected in series are provided as an uninterruptible power supply through triple power supply 4123.

Remote control unit 2013 has monitor screens 2613, 2913 and keyboards 2413, 2713 for weighing and metering functions. Remote control unit 2013 is electrically connected through line 4223 with a weigh microcomputer 4243 (RCA 1800 Micro System Z80 Microprocessor) having a 120 V optically isolated input/output relay board 4263. Remote control unit 2013 is also connected through line 4283 with machine sequencing microcomputer 4303 (RCA 1800 Micro System Z80 Microprocessor) having an optically isolated input/output relay board 4323 (Opto PB 24Q). Computer interface 4343 provides a data bus between weigh microcomputer 2413 and machine sequencing computer 4303.

Machine sequencing computer 4303 and weigh computer 4343 are supplied with 5 V power from triple power supply 4123 through line 4113. Both I/O boards 4263, 4323 are supplied with 120 V power through line 4363 at 4383.

Weigh computer 4243 contains an eight slot card cage with three 6623 RAM memory cards that contain the programs for operation of the weighing functions and monitoring of micro-ingredient additive inventory. Weigh computer 4243 also con-

tains a service box 6413 card to connect the service box to the computer, a printer 6413 output card, a 6003 system operating program card, and a 6264 memory card.

The machine computer 4303 has a six slot card cage, including two 6623 RAM memory cards, as well as a 6593, 6503, 6413 and 6003 CPU card. When apparatus 1013 is functioning in the metering mode, it uses only machine computer 4303. A complete set of ration data is stored on the machine computer's ROM memory separate from the ration data stored on the RAM memory cards of weigh computer 4243.

I/O board 4263 is connected through line 4483 with a speed control 4443 for controlling the speed of dispensing means 8013 in the weigh mode during a weigh cycle. For additives dispensed in weigh mode, speed control 4443 determines whether screw 9013 rotates at a fast speed during the initial weighing period of a given concentrate, or at a slow speed during the terminal phase of weighing as the weight of the concentrate approaches its predetermined amount. Since it is necessary to sense the weight of each concentrate that has been dispensed before the speed of dispensing means 8013 can be reduced and then stopped, load cells 2643 are electronically connected through scale head 4183 to the weigh microcomputer 4243. Weight determinations of the weighing means can therefore be sensed and sent to speed control 4443. For additives dispensed by volume during a weigh cycle, speed control 4443 determines that screw 9013 rotates at the preset third speed during the predetermined time of volumetric dispensing controlled by micro computer 4303.

I/O board 4323 is connected through line 4463 with speed control 4443 for controlling the speed of dispensing means 8013. Speed control 4443 determines that screw 9013 rotates at the preset metering speed on the third speed of speed control 4443 for a predetermined amount of time of volumetric dispensing controlled by microcomputer 4303.

Input/Output board 4323 is connected through line 4403 with ingredient level controls 4423 in each of bins 6813-7413 and containers 7613, 7813. These level controls are conventional switches located within the bins and containers for sensing when the level of additive concentrate in each bin has reached a predetermined low level. When the low level of additive concentrate is sensed by low level control 4213, a signal is sent to the operator indicating that more concentrate should be added.

I/O board 4323 of machine sequencing microcomputer 4303 is connected through line 4503 and relay 4523 with hopper rotation motor 1383 that inverts hopper means 1223. Line 4563 connects I/O board 4323 through relay 4583 with vibrator 1413 on hopper means 1223. A switch 4623 is also provided on hopper means 1223 for sensing whether the hopper is in an upright or inverted position, switch 4623 being connected to I/O board 4323 through line 4643. Finally, hopper means 1223 is provided with hopper air flush solenoid valve 4663 in header 1503 for controlling the introduction of air flush into compartments 1133-1163 of the hopper after it reaches its inverted position. Solenoid valve 4663 is connected to I/O board 4323 through line 4683.

Mixer motors 1883 on mixing vessel 1703 are connected through relay 4703 and line 4723 with I/O board 4323. Level control 1923 of the mixing vessel is connected with I/O board 4323 through line 4743. Solenoid valve 2123 in flush line 2023 is connected to I/O board 4323 through line 4763, and solenoid 2063 in fill line 2043 is connected to I/O board 4323 through line 4783. Booster pump 1953 for pumping water into vessel 1703 is connected through relay 4063 and line 4803 with I/O board 4323, while pump 2443 for withdrawing slurry and flush water from vessel 1703 is connected through

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relay 4073 and line 4823 with I/O board 4323. Low water control 4843 for the water supply is connected through line 4853 with the I/O board. Motion and panel control sensors 4863, which detect any oscillatory movements of hopper means 1223 and determine if any of the panels 1213 have been removed from apparatus 1013, are interconnected with I/O board 4323 through line 4903.

As earlier described in connection with FIG. 72, in the event of scale failure at step 3173, apparatus 1013 switches to a meter mode at 3183 and the weigh switch is turned off at 319. The off position of the weigh switch at 3193 is sensed as the meter switch being on at step 500 in FIG. 75. The numeral 1 is entered at keyboard 2413 at step 5023 to begin batching in the metering mode, and a ration code name is entered at 5043. The metering mode program of FIG. 75 searches at 5063 for a ration corresponding to the code entered at 5043. If the corresponding ration is not found at 5063, the program returns at 5083 to step 5043 so that another ration name can be entered.

Once the entered code has been matched with a ration at 5063, the program prompts for entry of information concerning batch size, which is entered at 5093. The program next prompts for entry of information concerning the number of batches to be processed, which is entered at 5103. The machine is then ready to batch at 5123 by volumetric metering instead of by weighing.

The program waits at step 5143 for a start signal 5163, which is supplied by a start switch 2993 on control panel 2813. It is then determined at 5183 if boost pump 1933 is on, and if it is not, an alarm is given at 5203 to indicate that the pump is off. Boost pump 1933 fills mixing vessel 1703 during a predetermined amount of time at step 5223. If the water level in mixing vessel 1703, as detected by water level sensor 1923, does not reach a predetermined level within a set period of time, an alarm sounds at 5243 to indicate a filling error.

Once level sensor 1923 determines that the water level in mixing vessel 1703 has reached a predetermined level, mixing motors 1883 are activated at 5263 to rotate mixing blades 1823 at a slow speed. An alarm sounds at step 5283 if the mixers are not on. While mixer blades 1823 induce a turbulent flow of water in mixing vessel 170, motor 1023 for screw 9013 below bin 6813 is activated at 5303. The metering speed of motor 1023 is a third speed, intermediate the fast and slow speeds used in dispensing additive concentrates by weight. Screw 9013 turns for a predetermined period of time sufficient to dispense a required volume of additive concentrate. The screw of each dispensing means 8013 below the bin containing desired additive concentrates turn simultaneously. Dispensing means 1203 for liquid additive concentrates in containers 7613, 7813 also operate simultaneously with dispensing means 8013 to volumetrically deliver predetermined amounts of liquid concentrate to compartments 1173, 1183.

When metering is complete at 5323, a signal is sent to motor 1383 at step 5343 to invert hopper means 1223 and dump its contents into the flowing water of vessel 1703. A switch determines at 5363 whether the hopper is inverted, and if it is not, an alarm is given at 5383 to indicate a dump failure. Hopper vibrators are then actuated at 5403 while hopper means 1223 is inverted to remove, by vibration, additive concentrate particles that remain stuck to the walls or bottom of containers 1133-1163. The air flush (FIG. 71) is actuated at 5423, and the program sends a signal at 5443 to send the hopper to its home, upright position by actuating motor 1383 to continue rotation of shaft 1363. If hopper means 1223 does not reach its home, upright position within a predetermined

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period of time set by 5463, an alarm sounds at 5483 to indicate that a malfunction has occurred and the hopper is still inverted.

When hopper means 1223 leaves its inverted position, mixing motors 1883 are switched to their second, higher speed at 5483. High speed mixing continues for a predetermined amount of time and then returns to low speed at step 5503 until a discharge signal 5543 is received at 5523 from a discharge switch 3833 on panel 2813 to turn on discharge pump 2443. It is determined at 5563 whether discharge pump 2443 is on, and if it is not, an alarm is given at 5583 to indicate a pump malfunction.

A predetermined, mix delay time period is initiated at 5583 during which period motors 1883 continue to move mixing blades 1823 at low speed. If the bottom of level probe 1923 is not cleared at 5603 within the predetermined period of time set in step 5583, an alarm is given at 5623 to indicate pumping problems. Once probe 1923 has been cleared, a predetermined flush cycle time is initiated at 5643, and boost pump 1933 is actuated at 5663 to move water through flush line 2143 while solenoid 2123 is open and solenoid 2063 is closed. Boost pump 1933 continues introducing water through line 2143 and into flush ring 2263, blade cleaning nozzles 2243, and port 1773 until a flush period has expired at 5683 and pump 1933 is turned off at 5703. Discharge pump 2443 continues operating for a period of time set by 5723 until all of the flush water residue has been removed through drain 1783 and sent to receiving station 2483. Discharge pump 2443 is then turned off at 5743 when the delay period set at step 5723 expires.

The metering mode program then determines whether another batch is needed at 5763, the need for another batch having been determined by the number of batches entered at 3103. If another batch is not needed, the program returns to step 5023 which prompts the operator to enter the code for another batch. If, on the other hand, another batch is required at 5763, the program checks at 5783 to determine if the meter switch is still on. If the metering switch is on (and conversely the weigh switch is off), the program returns to step 5123 where it repeats steps 5123-5763. If it is determined at 5783 that the meter switch is off, apparatus 1013 is turned off at 5803 and an alarm is given at 5823 indicating a mode change.

FIG. 76 shows a second embodiment of apparatus 1013 in which hopper means 1223 has been eliminated. In this embodiment, the weight of each microingredient concentrate dispensed is determined on a "loss of weight" basis. Each of dry concentrate bins 6003, 6023, 6043, 6063 is provided with a load cell 6083 for determining the weight of each container. The program in this embodiment activates a dispensing means 6103 (similar to dispensing means 8013 in apparatus 1013) to selectively sequentially or simultaneously deliver dry microingredients separately from bins 6003-6063 into mixing vessel 6123 having mixers 6143, 6163. Tank 6123 is filled and flushed through water supply line 6183 and emptied through discharge line 6203 after concentrates have been mixed with water in mixing vessel 6123.

Liquid microingredient concentrates may also be dispensed on a "loss of weight" basis by mounting containers of liquid microingredient on load cells.

The control means for the FIG. 76 embodiment includes a means for controlling the dispensing rate of each dispensing means 6103 in response to loss of weight sensings of load cell 6083 for each bin 6003-6063. Such a control means is similar to speed control 4443 for dispensing means 8013 in FIG. 74.

In a variation of the embodiment of FIG. 76, the control means includes a means for operating dispensing means 5103 for several cycles in the volumetric metering mode wherein

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additives are dispensed using a weight per unit time formula instead of load cell 6083. The actual weight of each additive concentrate dispensed will be determined by the loss of weight measured by each load cell 6083. The actual weight of concentrate lost will be compared by the computer to the theoretical amount dispensed. The discrepancy between the actual and theoretical amounts will then be corrected by adjusting the formula to dispense more accurately the desired amount of additive concentrate. Since the remaining concentrate in each bin has substantially the same density as that already dispensed, the remaining additive can be dispensed accurately by volume.

Correction of the weight per unit time formula used for volumetric dispensing in the metering mode can be used in connection with any embodiment employing a weighing means. For example, volumetric metering into hopper means 1223 of FIG. 62 can be adjusted by comparing actual weights of additive concentrate dispensed into compartments 1133-1163 with the desired amounts determined on a weight per unit time formula. The computer can then correct the formula to account for the density and other properties of the particular batch of additive concentrate being dispensed.

Alternatively, dispensing means 8013 can be operated in a weigh mode from the beginning through a major portion of a dispensing cycle for a particular additive concentrate. The load cell 2643 monitors the weight of concentrate dispensed at a given speed of screw 9013. This information is used by the control means to prepare a weight per unit time formula for volumetric dispensing of the particular additive being dispensed. The dispensing means 8013 is then operated in a volumetric metering mode independently of the weighing means for the final portion of the dispensing cycle.

Yet another embodiment of the system is shown in FIG. 77 which takes advantage of the fact that the density of liquid microingredient concentrates does not vary as greatly as solid microingredients. For this reason, it is possible to accurately meter liquid microingredients by volume while measuring the solid microingredients by weight. In the embodiment of FIG. 77, four dry microingredient containing supply means 7013, 7023, 7043, 7083 are shown to each be connected to a dispensing means 7103 similar to the dispensing means 8013 of apparatus 1013. Each of dispensing means 7103 conveys dry additive concentrate to a hopper means 7123 similar to hopper means 1223 in FIG. 65, the hopper means 7123 being suspended from a pair of weigh cells. Each additive concentrate is dispensed sequentially into hopper means 7123 from containers 7013, 7023, 7043, 7083 using dispensing means 7103 until a predetermined weight of each concentrate has been sensed by a load cell from which hopper means 7123 is suspended. Hopper means 7123 is then inverted to separately and simultaneously empty the dry microingredient contents of hopper means 7123 into flowing water in mixing vessel 7143 which is being agitated by mixers 7163, 7183.

In the FIG. 77 embodiment, liquid microingredients are separately stored in containers 7203, 7223 which are provided with tubes 7243 that empty into vessel 7143. Rotary or piston pumps 7283 are interposed in each tube 7243 to pump microingredients from containers 7203, 7223 directly into mixing vessel 7143, thereby bypassing entirely hopper means 7123.

The control means for the FIG. 77 embodiment may, in some embodiments, include means for selectively operating some dispensing means simultaneously and others sequentially. Pumps 7283 for the liquid additive concentrates in containers 7203, 7223 may, for example, be operated simultaneously with each other and with dispensing means 7103. Dispensing means 7103 for dry additives should, however, be

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operated sequentially in this embodiment since the overall weight of hopper means 7123 is sensed by the load cells from which the hopper is suspended. If the dry additives were dispensed simultaneously into hopper means 7123, it would not be possible to weigh accurately the amount of each additive dispensed. It is through cumulative weight determinations of sequentially dispensed additives that accurate weight determinations are made in the compartmented hopper. A first additive concentrate is delivered into a compartment of the hopper until its load cells register a first predetermined weight, and delivery of the first additive concentrate is stopped. Delivery of a second additive concentrate is then started and continued until the load cells register a second predetermined weight, and so on until predetermined weights of all selected additives have been delivered into the hopper.

In yet other embodiments which are not shown in the drawings, the control means is programmed to operate the dispensing means in an interrupted, on-off-on-off sequence to dispense selected microingredients into a weighing means such as hopper 1223. Weight determinations sensed by load cells 2643 would only be accepted when the dispensing means is switched off during the interrupted sequence. In this manner, weighing inaccuracies caused by movement of the dispensing means or settling of additives would not affect weight determinations.

In another disclosed embodiment, the isolating means includes programming the control means to prevent operation of any other moving components of apparatus 1013 while weight determinations are being made by the weighing means. The operation of dispensing means 8013 and mixer blades 1823 would, for example, be prevented by the control means while weight determinations were being made by load cell 2643.

FIG. 78 shows an apparatus indicated generally at 8003, which is somewhat similar to the embodiment of FIGS. 61-75 but having two separate weigh hoppers 8023, 8033 for weighing the multiple additive concentrates dispensed from additive concentrate storage means 8053, 8063 by dispenser means 8083. The weigh means of the apparatus 8003 includes separate weigh means for each weigh hopper 8023, 8033, thereby giving the apparatus the capability of weighing multiple additives simultaneously in different weigh hoppers. This capability gives the apparatus 8003 an advantage over the apparatus of FIG. 61 in being able to dispense, weigh and discharge all of the multiple microingredients of a given formulation into the mixing vessel 8103 and thereby complete the batching of a formulation, more quickly than the apparatus of FIG. 61.

The apparatus 8003 also includes a support frame means 8123 which may include either separate support and weigh frames as in the apparatus of FIG. 61 or a common support frame for all of the major mechanical components of the apparatus as depicted schematically in FIG. 78. Support frame 8123 rigidly supports the multiple microingredient concentrate storage containers 8053, 8063 and their associated dispensers or metering devices 8083, 8093. The support frame means 8123 also rigidly supports the mixing vessel 8103 which is shown as a mixing vessel common to both weigh hopper 8023 and weigh hopper 8033.

Other major components of the system of FIG. 78 include control and other components which would normally be mounted apart from support frame means 8123, including a pair of scale heads 8143, 8153, one for each weigh hopper, a weigh computer or central processing unit 8173 with its associated input/output board 8183, and a remote control unit or terminal 8203 for controlling the operation of the computer 8173. A separate machine computer or central processing unit

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8223 has an associated input/out board 8233. An interface 8243 enables communication between the machine computer 8223 and the weigh computer 8173. Scale heads 8143, 8153 transmit weight determination data through line 8263 to the input/output board of the weigh computer 8173. There is also a printer 8283 connected to the input/output board of weigh computer 8173 through line 8303 for printing desired output data from the weigh computer 8173.

In the apparatus 8003 there are four microingredient additive concentrate storage containers 8053 associated with weigh hopper 8023 and another four such storage containers 8063 associated with the other weigh hopper 8033, thereby giving each weigh hopper the capability of weighing and discharging four different additives into the mixing vessel 8103. The dispensers 8083 associated with the different additive storage containers 8053 are capable of operating independently of one another upon an appropriate command signal from a weigh computer 8173 transmitted from the input/output board 8183 through line 8323. Similarly, each of the dispensers 8093 for the four other storage containers 8063 are capable of operating independently of one another to dispense additives into the weigh hopper 8033 upon a suitable command signal from weigh hopper 8173 transmitted from input/output board 8183 through line 8343.

Weigh hopper 8023 is mounted at its opposite ends on a pair of load cells 8363, 8373 connected by suspension members 8383, 8393 and a pair of resilient isolator members 8403, 8413 to support frame 8123.

Weigh hopper 8033 is mounted in a similar manner by load cells 8423, 8433 to support frame 8123. Thus, each weigh hopper is independently mounted by separate weigh means to the frame 8123 for independent weighing of ingredients. The two load cells 8363, 8373 for weigh hopper 8023 are operatively connected by a line 8453 to scale head 8153. Weigh hopper 8033 is separately connected by a line 8463 to a separate scale head 8143. Both of the scale heads in turn are connected to the input/output board 8183 of weigh computer 8173 through line 8263. Thus each weigh hopper and its contents can be weighed separately and its contents cumulatively through its associated scale head simultaneously with the other weigh hopper. That is, both weigh hoppers can carry out their weighing functions at the same time and independently of one another.

Each weigh hopper 8023, 8033 is preferably similar in construction to the weigh hopper disclosed in FIGS. 62, 63, 65, 66 and 67. That is, each weigh hopper is mounted in a manner shown in such prior figures for rotation from its normal additive receiving upright position to an inverted discharge position by discharge means including an electric motor 8483 in the case of weigh hopper 8023 and electric motor 8493 in the case of weigh hopper 8033. Each is connected independently to the input/output board 8233 of the machine computer 8223 through suitable electrical conductors 8503 and 8513, respectively.

Each weigh hopper, 8023, 8033 also is provided with a motion sensor 8533, 8543, respectively, connected to the input output board 8183 of weigh computer 8173 through line 8563 for detecting any motion in either weigh hopper during the weighing process. The software for the weigh computer 8173 prevents a final weight determination from being made for a given weigh hopper whenever the motion sensor for that hopper senses motion that might give a false or highly inaccurate reading.

The support frame means 8123 for the weighing and delivery components of the apparatus is preferably enclosed by housing panels (not shown) in a manner similar to that shown in FIG. 61 to shield and isolate the weighing components of

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the apparatus from external ambient forces that could cause undesirable motion and thus inaccurate weight readings. Such forces typically might include the effects of wind or jarring of the components by direct contact of personnel. The support frame means 8123 is provided with a sensor 8583 which is also connected by line 8563 to the input/output board of weigh computer 8173. Sensor 8583 is operable to prevent a weight determination from being made whenever a panel is removed from the support frame 8123. Thus the motion sensors 8533, 8543 for the weigh hoppers and the panel sensor 8583 for support frame 8123 provide additional means for isolating the weighing components of the apparatus from influences that could affect weight determinations and the accuracies of such determinations.

A further means of enhancing the accuracy of the weight determinations of the apparatus disclosed in FIG. 78 is the mounting of the discharge motors 8483 and 8493 in conjunction with their respective weigh hoppers 8023, 8033 so that such motors become part of the tare weight of the hoppers in making additive weight determinations. Because very lightweight, flexible electrical conductors can connect such electric motors to the operable control components of the apparatus, such conductors will have no appreciable effect on the weight determinations of the weigh means. This should be contrasted with the hydraulically actuated discharge means in conjunction with the weigh hoppers of prior apparatus. With a prior hydraulically actuated discharge means, relatively stiff hydraulic conduit must connect the hydraulic motor associated with the hopper to the source of hydraulic fluid remote from the hopper. Typically such hydraulic conduit affects weight determinations of the hopper in such instances because it inherently provides some structural support for the hopper, thereby influencing load cell weight sensings as ingredients are added to the hopper because the conduit is partially supporting some of the load of the added weight.

The apparatus in FIG. 78 also includes positive mixing means within the mixing vessel 8103 in the form of a pair of mixing blades 8603, 8613, each driven by an electric motor 8623, 8633. The mixer motors are connected by electrical conductor means 8643 to the input/output board 8233 of the machine computer 8223. A slurry discharge line 8663 leads from a bottom opening of mixing vessel 8103 to the input side of a discharge pump 8683. The discharge line continues at 8703 from the discharge side of discharge pump 8683 to a conventional feed mixer such as typically the truck-mounted feed mixer 8723. A booster pump 8743 pumps a liquid carrier such as water from a source (not shown) through a fill line 8763 into the mixing vessel. A solenoid operated valve 8783 in fill line 8763 controls the admission of the water carrier into the mixing vessel and is operated by the machine computer 8223 through a suitable conductor 8783 connected to the input/output board 8233 of such computer.

A flush line 8803 branches from fill line 8763 downstream of booster pump 8743 and upstream of fill valve 8743. Another solenoid actuated valve 8823 in the flush line connected to the input/output board 8233 of machine computer 8223 through conductor 8843, controls the admission of flush fluid into the mixing vessel.

The hardware components of the control system including the weigh computer 8173, machine computer 8223 and their associated input/output boards, the printer 8283, and the remote control unit 8203, may be similar to those same units described with respect to the embodiment of FIG. 61. Similarly, the software controlling the operation of such computers can be varied to vary the operating sequence of the machine of FIG. 78.

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A typical operating sequence of the machine of the apparatus of FIG. 78 is as follows:

A driver drives a feedtruck into a feed-receiving station in a cattle feedlot. The driver departs his vehicle, approaches the remote control unit 8203 and selects the formulation of feed additive concentrates to be batched and delivered into his truck, depending on the specific lot of animals to be fed within the feedlot. The formulation is selected typically by the operator depressing a key corresponding to the formulation selected on the computer terminal of the remote control unit.

Assuming that predetermined weights of two additives A1, A2 in storage containers 8053 and two additives A5, A6 from storage containers 8063 are to be included in the formulation, the dispenser 8083 for container A1 begins to dispense the additive A1 into weigh hopper 8023. At the same time, the dispenser 8093 for container A5 begins to dispense additive A5 into weigh hopper 8033. The dispensing of additive A1 into weigh hopper 8023 continues until a predetermined weight of such additive has been added to such hopper as determined by the load cells 8363, 8373 and the associated scale head 8153, at which point the weigh computer 8173 stops the dispensing of additive A1 from its storage container by stopping its associated dispensing means 8083. At the same time, a weight determination of the additive A5 added to weigh hopper 8033 is determined in the same manner, but independently of the weight determination occurring in hopper 8023.

When the predetermined weight of additive A1 has been added to weigh hopper 8023, depending on programming, two alternative functions can occur. Either the weigh hopper 8023 can be inverted by motor 8483 to discharge the additive A1 into the mixing vessel 8103 and then returned to its upright position to receive the next additive A2, or the weigh hopper can remain in its upright position while the dispenser 8083 for additive A2 operates to add, cumulatively, the predetermined weight of additive A2 to weigh hopper 8023. If the latter sequence is used, weigh hopper 8023 is inverted by its discharge motor 8483 to discharge the predetermined weights of additive A1 and additive A2 together into the mixing vessel 8103. The same options are available with respect to the addition of additives A5 and A6 to weigh hopper 8033 and the discharge of the contents of the weigh hopper 8033 into the mixing vessel 8103. It is important to note that both weigh hoppers 8023 and 8033 can operate entirely independently to weigh and discharge their preselected additives into the mixing vessel 8103, although the machine and weigh computers could also be programmed to cause both weigh hoppers 8023, 8033 to wait until all of the selected additives have been added and weighed within each weigh hopper and then both weigh hoppers inverted simultaneously by their respective motors to discharge all of the weighed additives at once into the mixing vessel. That is, each additive can be added, weighed and discharged either separately or cumulatively with other additives, depending on the programming selected for the control system.

Regardless of which of the above described dispensing, weighing and discharge options are selected, preferably booster pump 8743 pumps the carrier water through open valve 8743 and fill line 8763 to fill the mixing vessel 8103 to a predetermined level before any additive is discharged into the mixing vessel. This will prevent different and possibly incompatible additives from intermixing in concentrated form and also prevent additives from sticking to the inside walls of the vessel, making it difficult to remove such additives even after carrier water or flush water is added to the vessel.

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Also preferably before the discharge of any additives into the mixing vessel in making up a batch, mixing blades 8603, 8613 rotate to create a turbulent flow within the mixing vessel so that additives entering the liquid carrier are quickly intermixed with and dispersed throughout the carrier, thereby diluting the concentrates.

When the predetermined weights of the selected additives A1, A2, A5 and A6 all have been weighed in their respective weigh hoppers 8023, 8033 and discharged into the water 10 carrier within mixing vessel 8103, mixing blades 8603, 8613 continue to rotate for a time to ensure a uniform dispersal of all additives throughout the carrier liquid slurry thus formed. Of course at this time, booster pump 8743 shuts off and fill line valve 8743 closes, as does flush line valve 8823.

When mixing is complete within mixing vessel 8103, discharge pump P2 operates to pump the slurry formulation from the mixing vessel through discharge line 8663 and to the waiting feed mixer truck 8723 through discharge line 8703. When the level of slurry within the mixing vessel drops below 20 a predetermined level as determined by level sensors (not shown) within the vessel, booster pump 8743 restarts and flush line valve 8823 opens to pump flush water into the mixing vessel through its top and along its side walls to flush all slurry residue from the vessel. Flushing continues as the discharge of slurry proceeds through the discharge lines 8663, 8703. Discharge pump 8683 continues to operate during the complete flush period, pumping the flush liquid with the slurry into the feed mixer truck 8723. After a predetermined length of time sufficient to enable the complete flushing of the mixing vessel and discharge lines, and the pumping of all slurry into the feed mixer 8723, booster pump 8743 stops and flush valve 8823 closes. Pump 8683 continues to operate until all of the slurry and most of the flush liquid is pumped into the feed mixer 8723. Thereafter the truck operator returns to his truck and drives away as the mixing of the feed and slurry continues. Typically, the driver drives to the feed bunks of selected pens or lots of animals and delivers the additive-bearing feed into the bunks immediately upon departure from the additive receiving station. Thereafter, typically, another feed mixer truck arrives at the additive receiving station represented by the position of truck 8723 and that operator goes through the same procedure as just described, selecting the same or a different formulation depending on the requirements of the animals within the lot or pens that are to be fed with the feed ration from such truck.

During the additive formulating process as just described, the system will not allow a weight determination of a given additive to be made so long as a panel is removed from the support frame 8123 as detected by sensor 8583. Nor will a weight determination be made if either one of the motion sensors 8533, 8543 associated with each weigh hopper detects movement of a weigh hopper that could affect the weight determination to be made in such weigh hopper.

Typically, scale heads 8143, 8153 receive weight sensings 55 from their respective load cells 6 to 8 times per second. The scale heads then average such readings for that given unit of time and send the average reading via line 8263 to the input/output board 8183 of the weigh computer 8173. Computer 8173 then records the averaged weight per unit of time as the weight upon which the computer acts to control the operation of the additive dispensing means and discharge means. Because of the large number of readings being averaged before the average is transmitted to the weigh computer, any single erroneous reading transmitted to a scale head by the 60 load cells will have an insignificant effect on the accuracy of the averaged reading transmitted from the scale head to the weigh computer for processing. This slow updating of the

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weigh computer (about once per second or less) with an average of a large number of weight sensings received by the scale head is further insurance against inaccurate weight readings and enhances the accuracy of the entire system. If the computer updating were faster (such as twice per second or more), an erroneous reading would have a greater effect on the accuracy of weights recorded and processed by the computer.

FIG. 79 is a flowchart of a computer program applicable to the computers of FIG. 74 and representing a modification of the program of FIG. 75 for operating the apparatus of, for example, FIG. 76 on a weight-compensated metering basis.

The flowchart of FIG. 79 incorporates steps 5003-5303 of the FIG. 75 program in box 900 and also the completion-of-metering step 5323 of the same program. When all microingredients have been metered into the mixing vessel 6123, the program continues to sequence through steps 5493-5823 of the metering program of FIG. 75, skipping steps 5343-5483 because the apparatus of FIG. 76, unlike the apparatus of FIGS. 74 and 78, does not use a weigh hopper.

As the program continues to sequence through mixing and discharge steps 5493-5823 as indicated at box 9023 in FIG. 79, the program also, at least after so many metering cycles, or if desired after every metering cycle, reads the weight of each microingredient storage container 6003, 6023, 6043, 6063 as indicated at 9043. Thereafter, as indicated at box 9063, the program commands the computer to calculate the actual loss of weight of the ingredient storage containers to determine the actual weight of each microingredient metered, by subtracting the weight of each storage container sensed after metering at 9043 from the initial weight of each storage container prior to such metering steps.

The program also commands the computer to calculate the theoretical weight loss of each storage container, which is also the theoretical weight of each ingredient used, by multiplying the metering rate of each metering device 6103 in, for example, grams per minute, by the length of time each metering device 6103 has operated, as indicated at box 9083. The program then commands the computer to compare the actual weight of ingredient used as calculated at 9063 with the theoretical or target weight of ingredient used as calculated at 9083, as indicated at box 9103. From this comparison the program commands the computer to adjust either the time that each metering device 6103 operates, or the rate of speed at which each such device operates, or both, during a metering cycle so that the actual weight of ingredient used as determined by weighing equals the desired or theoretical weight of ingredient used as determined by metering. This adjustment command occurs at box 9123 in the computer program. When the metering speed or time adjustment is made, the program returns to the start of the metering cycle as indicated at box 9003.

The program also includes a fill mode or routine which is used whenever a microingredient storage bin 6003, 6023, 6043, 6063 is refilled. In such mode, the program commands a reading of the initial weight of the storage container being refilled at box 9143. The additional microingredient is then added to the storage container as indicated in box 9163. The program then commands a reading of the filled weight of the storage container at box 9183 and enters such weight in computer memory. At this point the fill subroutine has been completed and the apparatus is conditioned to start another metering cycle.

The foregoing described program operates the apparatus of FIG. 76 primarily as a metering apparatus. However, the metering devices 6103 are adjusted after completion of a predetermined number of metering cycles based on actual

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loss-of-weight determinations of each storage bin as registered by the weighing means 6083 for each storage container. Thus the apparatus of FIG. 76 when operated in accordance with the program of FIG. 79 is actually a hybrid weight-metering system in which the metering components are periodically readjusted so that the theoretical or target weights of ingredients metered will closely approximate the actual weights of ingredients dispensed.

The described weight-compensated metering system can also be used in a continuous mill application in contrast to the batch mill application described with respect to FIG. 76. In a continuous mill system, the metering devices meter the additive concentrates continuously at predetermined rates from their storage bins into a liquid carrier, which in turn flows into a feed ration at a predetermined rate. In such a system, weight losses of the storage bins can be determined periodically and then used to calculate the necessary adjustments of metering rates of the metering devices to bring the actual weights of additives dispensed per unit of time by metering into line with the theoretical weights desired. This can be done without interruption of metering, simply by adjusting the speed controls or the metering devices.

XI.) Feed Delivery 2

This subsection describes additional process steps and system components for delivering feed to animals. These process steps and system components can be used in conjunction with the disclosed AIF.

Referring now to FIG. 80 of the drawings, there is shown several cattle pens 1214 in a feedlot, each having an associated feed bunk. A feed bunk holds a ration, i.e., a type of feed, in a selected quantity for the cattle contained within the pen. The arrow 1814 represents a route that a truck 2014 may take for the driver to view the condition of each feed bunk from the truck cab. That route, as will be described, depends on which cattle pens contain cattle and are thus currently receiving feed.

Each pen and associated feed bunk have means of identification such as an alphanumeric symbol (i.e., a101, d104, 112, etc.) mounted near the truck route that can be read by the person viewing the bunks. Alternatively, the identification may be through automated means such as an RF signal transmitted locally by a transmitter 2214 or a bar code 2414 affixed to the cattle pen. Such means provide an accurate identification of the pen without the driver having to attempt a written entry onto a feed card.

To "read" the bunks, i.e., identify the bunks and assignment data regarding feed rations, the driver carries in the cab a portable computer 2614 such as a PDT111 manufactured by the MSI Data Corporation. The computer 2614 includes a data entry means such as a keyboard 2814 for entering feed assignment data and a display screen 3014 for optimally viewing yard sheet data while making a feed assignment. If the cattle pens include automated identification means such as the transmitter 2214 or bar code 2414, a corresponding data entry means such as a machine capable of reading the identification signal is coupled to the computer 2614. For reading the bar codes 2414, a bar code scanner 3214, such as the SYMBOLTEC LS8100 available from the MSI Corporation, is connected to the computer 2614 via a conventional laser interface module 3414. For reading the RF signals generated by transmitters 2214, a conventional RF receiver 3614 may be connected to the computer 2614 via a conventional demodulator/decoder module 3814. Whichever of the scanner 3214 or receiver 3614 is utilized, the machine is coupled to one of the computer's serial I/O port 4014. Alternative means of automatic cattle pen identification may include Loran-type radio frequency triangulation, sound waves, etc.

The portable computer 2614 is adapted to receive the feed consumption data before a reading of the feed bunks so that the driver may review that data while entering assignment data. The portable computer 2614 is also adapted to communicate with a host computer 4214 for transferring the assignment data to it after all the feed bunks have been read. The movement of data between computers is illustrated in FIG. 81. The assignment data is utilized by the host computer to update its feed consumption data for each of the corresponding cattle pens. The feed consumption data includes consumption history for each pen, weather history (which affects feeding), physical condition of the feed bunk, which bunks should presently be read, and other data relevant to feeding. The assignment data may include a change in the ration quantity to be assigned and the present physical condition of the bunk, i.e., whether the bunk is completely empty, needs to be cleaned, whether the feed needs to be mixed with hay, or the time of feeding to be changed, etc.

The host computer 4214 is normally located remote from the cattle pens because this computer is required for a number of additional feedlot operational and management tasks that require central access. It should be noted, however, that the portable computer 2614 could be replaced by a "dumb" terminal and linked to the host computer continuously by radio signal instead of a physical connection. It should also be understood that the use of a host computer is not required. The feed consumption data could be stored and updated solely in the portable computer 2614. This approach is usually not done because the feed consumption data is utilized for other purposes, such as management and invoicing, and must be made available for those purposes in a computer 4214 located centrally in the feedlot.

The host computer 4214 is programmed to utilize the newly entered assignment data for a number of tasks. One task is to determine the best or most efficient route for the truck 2014 to read the selected feed bunks in the feedlot. As different cattle pens are emptied and filled with cattle, this data is entered in the host computer 4214 to update the feed consumption data. The computer 4214 calculates therefrom the best route through the cattle lot to read the currently used bunks. The route is transferred to the portable computer as part of the feed consumption data at the beginning of a bunk reading. At each pen during the route, pen numbers may be displayed on screen 3014 after the previous bunk is read. The entered assignment data is also used to organize feed rations to be delivered to each feed bunk. This data is defined as feed delivery data and may be printed out for a feed truck operator by means of a printer 4614 coupled to the computer 4214 as shown in FIG. 81 and as will be described.

FIGS. 82A and 82B are a flowchart illustrating the computerized operation of the bunk reader system. For clarity, each step of the flowchart described herein is followed by a numeral in parenthesis corresponding to the flowchart steps in the figure. Prior to beginning a reading of the bunks, the feed consumption data is downloaded from the host computer 4214 into the portable computer 2614 and the computer 2614 placed in the truck cab.

With the driver approaching a feed bunk, the program within the computer 2614 is called (5014). The driver is first prompted to enter a number to determine the identification means for the cattle pen (5214). If he enters the number 1 in response, for example, the computer 2614 displays an expected pen number from the bunk reader route list generated by the host computer 4214 and contained within the feed consumption data transferred to the computer 2614 (5414). If the number 2 is entered, an automated identification means such as described is employed by the driver (5614). The driver

may also enter the pen number manually if desired. The pen number is then displayed for the driver to confirm its correctness (5814). He confirms by entering a carriage return on the keyboard 2814 or reenters the number if it is incorrect (6014).

With the correct pen number confirmed, the driver is prompted to enter a feed code corresponding to a change in the ration quantity assigned to the pen's feed bunk (6214). The code is simple: +1 is entered to increase the ration quantity; 0 is entered for no change in the ration quantity; and -1 is entered to decrease the ration quantity. These entries are later translated by the host computer 4214 into a percentage change in the base amount of the ration quantity, e.g., 5%. Note that the driver need not identify the ration type explicitly. This identification is made by the host computer from the entered pen number.

At this point, the driver has the option of entering a flag code (6414). Flag codes correspond to the physical condition of the bunk, feeding priority, feeding mix changes, or other actions to be taken while or before more feed is delivered (6614). For example, if the driver notices a feed bunk is wiped clean or "slick," he enters a number code indicating that condition. If the bunk should be cleaned, another code number is entered. If hay should be mixed in with the next ration quantity, still another code number is entered, etc.

Once the feed code and flag codes, if desired, have been entered, the computer 2614 prompts the driver on whether to display the historical feed consumption data for the pen (6814). The driver typically evaluates this data only if the feeding of the cattle in the pen appears to be unusual. For example, a bunk that is slick several days in a row may indicate the base amount of feed is too small. Conversely, too much feed left over from a prior feeding may indicate the base amount is excessive. The consumption data indicates the actual ration quantities dispensed previously, as well as weather history that may affect prior feeding (7014). The driver then has the option of changing the base amount of the next ration quantity (7214) by entering a command. He may increase it (7414), decrease it (7614), or leave it unchanged. If the base amount of the ration quantity is to remain the unchanged, the driver simply enters a return on keyboard 2814.

The computer 2614 then checks to determine if the route is finished (7814). If not, the driver is prompted to proceed to the next pen and the bunk reading continues. Once all feed bunks have been read, the driver is prompted to confirm that the bunk reading route is finished (7914).

The assignment data entered during the feed bunk reading is transferred to the host computer 4214 for generating feed delivery data. This data, organized by ration type, is used for loading feed trucks and for organizing feed truck routes through the feed lot. An example of the delivery data produced by the host computer 4214 for the feed trucks is shown in Table I below.

TABLE I

FEED LOADOUT REPORT

Pen	Pounds to Feed
*a101	500
b102	1000
c103	2000
d104	1500
e105	1300
F106	2000
g107	3000
h108	4000

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TABLE I-continued

FEED LOADOUT REPORT	
Pen	Pounds to Feed
i109	3000
j110	1500
*k111	3000
112	3500
m113	3500
MAXIMUM LOAD SIZE = 6000 lbs.	
<u>LOAD NO. 1</u>	
*a101	500
F106	2000
*k111	3000
Total	5500
<u>LOAD NO. 2</u>	
b102	1000
c103	2000
d104	1500
e105	1300
Total	5800

*denotes first priority to feed

Normally, each feed truck carries one type of feed ration and is filled with selected ration quantities to its maximum load. For example, in Table I above, the ration quantities for pen number a101, F106, and k111 have been combined in a single load of 5500 lbs., that is near the maximum load of 6000 lbs. for a feed truck. These quantities were determined from the amount of ration quantity for each pen plus whatever changes have been made to the base amount from prior readings of the feed bunks. Note also that the flag code for feeding priority was entered during the last bunk readings. The priority loads are thus combined by the computer 42 into the first load to be delivered to the cattle pens.

Referring now to FIG. 83, there is shown a drawing of a computerized feed delivery system. A feed truck 8014 includes a weighing scale 8214 for weighing the total load in the truck hopper and for weighing individually the ration quantities to be dispensed into each feed bunk. The scale is conventional and is adapted to provide an output signal indicating the weight of the load. Accompanying the truck operator is another portable computer 2614 the same as or similar to the type used for bunk reading. It includes a keyboard 2814, display screen 3014, and one or more I/O ports 4014. The computer 2614 is adapted to connect to the scale 8214 through an I/O port 4014. As in the bunk reader system, the computer 2614 may be associated with other data entry means such as an RF receiver 3614 or bar code scanner 3214. The feed bunks, of course, may include corresponding automated identification means such as RF transmitters 2214 or bar code 2414. FIG. 83 further shows a feed mill 8414 from which feed is obtained for delivery to the feed bunks. The mill 8414 has a number of ration bins 8614 each holding a different type of ration and having means of identification such as an alphanumeric symbol, radio signal from a transmitter 2214, or a bar code 2414 affixed to the bin.

The type of feed ration and base amount of ration quantity for each cattle pen when initially filled with cattle is entered into host computer 42 by a feedlot supervisor. The ration quantities may be modified by the assignment data from the bunk readings. However, if the type of ration for the pen is changed or if drugs are added to the basic ration, this information is entered directly into the host computer. Certain drugs cannot be taken by cattle immediately before they are

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shipped from the feedlot for slaughter. One of the functions of the feed delivery system is to make certain that cattle ready for slaughter have drugs withdrawn from their feed rations in a timely manner, as will be shown.

FIGS. 84A and 84B are a flowchart that illustrates the interactive programming of the computer 2614 for directing the feed truck operator to deliver the appropriate ration and quantity to each pen. Initially, the host computer 4214 has generated the feed delivery data for each pen from the assignment data received from the bunk reading. Prior to delivery, the feed delivery data shown in Table I is downloaded into the portable computer 2614 via an I/O port 4014. The present manner of transfer is the same as in FIG. 81, the difference being that in this step feed delivery data is transferred from the host computer 4214 to the portable computer 2614 prior to the delivery and feed dispensed data is transferred from the portable 2614 to the host computer 4214 after delivery.

The operator first proceeds to the mill 8414 for loading the feed truck and calls the program (9014). At the mill, he enters his feed delivery truck number and operator number (9214, 9414). If the operator is using an RF receiver 3614 or bar code scanner 3214 to identify the particular feed bin, he enters a return on the keyboard 2814 to automatically read the identifying ration number, e.g., "2," on the bin (9614, 9814). Otherwise, the ration number is entered manually. The operator then connects the computer 2614 through its I/O port 4014 to the scale 8214 and enters a return to record the empty scale weight (1004, 1024). That information may be entered manually as well (1004). The operator proceeds to load the feed truck to the level specified in Table I, provided to him on a printout (1044). The scale is again read to determine the total weight of feed loaded, either automatically (1064, 1084) or manually (1064). At this point, the ration number and the total ration quantity loaded into the truck have been recorded in the computer 2614, as well as the ration quantity or amount to be delivered to each pen in Table I.

The driver then proceeds to the first pen 1214 whose number, a101, is retrieved from the route list produced by the host computer 4214 and displayed on the display screen 3014 (1104). Upon arriving at the indicated pen, the driver identifies the pen using a machine (1124, 1144) or manually (1124). The computer 2614 in response compares the entered pen number against the pen numbers that are to receive that ration number to determine if the operator has driven to a correct pen (1164). If the two numbers do not match, an alarm is given (1184). The operator is then asked via the screen 3014 if dispensing feed for that pen should be aborted (1204). An affirmative answer aborts the feeding at the pen, and the screen 3014 directs the driver to proceed to the next pen. The operator gives a negative answer to override and dispense the feed. The computer then determines if there is a feed withdrawal problem, as described (1224). As before, an alarm is given if a potential problem exists (1244) and the operator is given the chance to abort the pen feeding (1264).

Immediately before the operator proceeds to dispensing the feed, the scale is again read manually or automatically (1284, 1304). The computer 2614 then displays on the screen 3044 the target weight for the truck operator (1324). The operator dispenses feed (1344), with the computer 2614 monitoring the scale weight as the weight dispensed approaches the desired ration quantity for the feed bunk. The operator is notified by alarm or otherwise when the dispensed quantity is close to the desired quantity, such as within a hundred pounds (1364). Once the ration quantity for the pen has been dispensed, the operator enters the remaining scale weight into the computer (1384) to confirm the quantity. This entry can be made manually or automatically (1404).

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The program then checks to determine if the delivery route is finished (1424). If not, the driver is prompted to proceed to the next pen and its number is displayed (1104). The program continues until each pen on the route has received its ration quantity (1444).

On returning to the host computer, the portable computer 2614 is taken from the feed truck 8014 and the data and actual feed dispensed is transferred from the computer 2614 to the host computer 4214. This data is used to charge feed costs to the lot owners whose cattle are contained in the pens. An example of data generated by host computer 4214 after comparing the feed delivery data against the feed dispensed data is shown in Table II.

TABLE II

FEED TRUCK NO. 1 REPORT						
Pen	Ration	Ordered	Fed	Diff	Date	Time
a101	2	500	505	5	1/21	5:17 PM
F106	2	2000	1998	-2	1/21	5:19 PM
k111	2	3000	3002	2	1/21	5:20 PM

In view of the many possible embodiments to which the principles of my invention may be applied, I claim as my invention all such embodiments as may come within the scope and spirit of the following claims and equivalents thereto.

I claim:

1. A method for tracking animals, comprising:
receiving a group of animals;
entering information relating to the group of animals into a computer system;
entering into the computer system an identification of each animal from a physical identifier for the animal enabling the computer system to identify each animal and distinguish each animal from every other animal in a group;
entering into the computer system animal data relating to individual animals and correlating the animal data with an identification of the individual animals in the computer system;
entering into the computer system location data for identified individual animals for a location or locations occupied by the identified individual animals;
correlating in the computer system the location data for each identified individual animal with the identified individual animal's identification;
filtering confidential information from data entered into the computer system, wherein the confidential information includes at least one previous location identifier; and
allowing a user to review a filtered record for an identified individual animal that includes a present location identifier for a present location of the identified individual animal and that the identified individual animal occupied at least one previous location without disclosing the at least one previous location identifier.

2. The method according to claim 1 wherein animal data comprises height, weight, size, age, genetic background, sex, species, color, type of feed, drug treatment history, or any combination thereof.

3. The method according to claim 1 wherein information relating to the group of animals comprises prior history data and a group condition score.

4. The method according to claim 3 wherein information relating to the group of animals further comprises a breakdown of sex, age, breed, hide thickness, or any combination thereof for the group.

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5. The method according to claim 1, further comprising: gathering location data for locations occupied by an identified individual animal using a GPS device associated with the identified individual animal;

entering or transmitting the location data into the computer system; and
correlating the location data with the identified individual animal's identification.

10 6. The method according to claim 5 wherein the GPS device is integrated with the physical identifier for the identified individual animal.

15 7. The method according to claim 1 wherein filtering confidential information further comprises filtering the present location identifier.

8. The method according to claim 1 further comprising identifying in the computer system a subsequently identified animal that shared a location with an initially identified individual animal.

20 9. The method according to claim 8 wherein identifying in the computer system the subsequently identified animal comprises:

comparing the at least one previous location identifier to location identifiers associated with the subsequently identified animal;

correlating a subset of data from the animal data to a subset of data associated with the subsequently identified animal; and

filtering the at least one previous location identifier and the location identifiers associated with the subsequently identified animal.

25 10. The method according to claim 9 further comprising identifying in the computer system a second subsequently identified animal that shared at least one location with the subsequently identified animal.

30 11. The method according to claim 1 further comprising: requesting a trace report from a data trustee upon discovering a diseased animal;
generating a trace report that filters confidential information; and
identifying locations of identified animals that have commingled with the diseased animal.

35 12. The method according to claim 11 further comprising implementing a treatment strategy for identified animals that have commingled with the diseased animal.

40 13. The method according to claim 12 wherein the treatment strategy comprises treating the disease, quarantining the identified animals, slaughtering the identified animals, or a combination thereof.

45 14. The method according to 11 wherein requesting a trace report from a data trustee comprises:
determining an animal identifier for the diseased animal;
performing a data look-up in a public sector database to retrieve a data record address that stores diseased animal data; and
retrieving the diseased animal data from the data trustee using the data record address.

50 15. The method according to claim 14 wherein generating the trace report comprises:

55 performing a search on animal data stored at the data trustee for location history data, wherein the search is performed using the animal identifier of the diseased animal;
compiling the location history data for the diseased animal;
comparing the location history data of the diseased animal to the identified animals; and

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generating a report of shared locations where the diseased animal commingled with the identified animals and wherein non-official information is filtered from the report.

16. The method according to claim **15** wherein the report further includes present locations of the identified animals. **5**

17. The method according to claim **16** wherein performing the search on animal data further comprises using a group identifier representing a premises arrival date. **10**

18. The method according to claim **16**, further comprising providing filtered information to an authorized user upon request, wherein the filtered information comprises location identifiers of identified animals that have commingled with the diseased animal. **15**

19. The method according to claim **1** wherein the computer system includes a feedlot business system (FBS) computer capable of performing accounting functions. **20**

20. The method according to claim **19** wherein data can be passed back and forth between the FBS computer and one or more various computers used in the computer system. **25**

21. The method of claim **20** wherein at least one of the one or more various computers is at a location remote from the FBS computer. **30**

22. The method according to claim **19** wherein the computer system further comprises a computerized animal drug inventory control and animal health history and drug treatment system, a computerized feed additive delivery system, a computerized bunk reader system, or each and every combination thereof. **35**

23. The method of claim **22** further comprising receiving and storing data from the computerized animal drug inventory control and animal health history and drug treatment system, the computerized feed additive delivery system, the computerized bunk reader system, or each and every combination thereof. **40**

24. The method of claim **23** wherein the data includes drug usage information, feed ration usage information, feed additive usage information, or each and every combination thereof. **45**

25. The method of claim **23** wherein the FBS computer is capable of receiving and storing data concerning an amount of feed ration delivered to at least one or more feed pens from the computerized bunk reader system. **50**

26. The method according to claim **22** wherein the FBS computer further comprises the animal drug inventory control, animal health history and drug treatment system, the feed additive delivery system, the bunk reader system, or a combination of such systems. **55**

27. The method according to claim **22** wherein each of the FBS computer and the computerized animal drug inventory control, animal health history and drug treatment system, the computerized feed additive delivery system, and the computerized bunk reader system is a separate computer in communication with one another. **60**

28. The method according to claim **22** wherein the FBS computer records and stores data from the computerized feed additive delivery system and utilizes such information to calculate a cost of production and feed additive costs for an identified animal. **65**

29. The method according to claim **1**, further comprising: measuring identified individual animals at a processing location and entering measurement characteristic data into the computer including at least weight; determining in the computer system, from at least in part the measurement characteristic data, a projected condition for the identified individual animals; **70**

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recording the condition for the identified individual animals in the computer system and correlating the condition with at least the weight measurement characteristic data for the identified individual animals;

determining in the computer system for the identified individual animals a projected feed intake, a projected gain and an estimated time required to reach the projected condition, from at least in part the measured characteristic data, the projected condition, feed ration information, and if used, growth promotants; and

directing identified individual animals to one or more feed pens at a feedlot, and there feeding the identified individual animals for a feeding period. **75**

30. The method according to claim **29**, further comprising: administering a feed additive growth promotant to identified individual animals in a feed pen based at least in part on an estimated time required to reach a projected condition for the identified individual animals in the feed pen; **80**

dispensing the feed additive growth promotant into a feed ration by a computerized feed additive delivery system for administering the feed additive growth promotant to the identified individual animals in the feed pen; and dispensing the feed additive growth promotant at a determined time prior to shipment of the animals from the feedlot for substantially optimizing economic value for the identified individual animals in the feed pen. **85**

31. The method according to claim **30** wherein the feed additive growth promotant is selected from a group of growth promotants including ionophores. **90**

32. The method according to claim **30** further comprising discontinuing dispensing the feed additive growth promotant into the feed ration for the identified individual animals in the feed pen to provide a withdrawal period for the feed additive growth promotant. **95**

33. The method according to claim **30** further comprising dispensing the feed additive growth promotant into the feed ration at a time prior to the estimated time required to reach the projected condition to facilitate substantially optimizing the economic value of the identified individual animals in the feed pen. **100**

34. The method according to claim **1** further comprising entering into the computer system a group identifier for each animal in the group of animals. **105**

35. The method according to claim **34** wherein the group identifier for each animal in the group of animals is the same. **110**

36. The method according to claim **34** wherein the group identifier represents a premises arrival date. **115**

37. The method according to claim **36** wherein the group identifier further represents a premises identifier. **120**

38. The method according to claim **34** wherein the group of animals is received at a feedlot, and the group identifier for each animal at the feedlot is the same. **125**

39. The method according to claim **34** wherein the group identifier for each animal represents a pen where the animal is contained. **130**

40. The method according to claim **1** further comprising allowing a user to review a filtered record for a plurality of identified individual animals that includes a present location identifier for the present location of each identified individual animal of the plurality of identified individual animals and that each identified individual animal of the plurality of identified individual animals occupied at least one previous location without disclosing the at least one previous location identifier. **135**

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41. The method according to claim **40** wherein the filtered record further includes an age of each identified individual animal of the plurality of identified individual animals.

42. A method for tracking animals, comprising:
 receiving a group of animals;
 entering information relating to the group of animals into a computer system;
 entering into the computer system a group identifier for the group of animals enabling the computer system to distinguish animals in the group of animals from animals in every other group;
 entering into the computer system location data for the group of animals for a location or locations occupied by the group of animals;
 correlating in the computer system the location data for the group of animals with the group identifier for the group of animals;
 filtering confidential information from data entered into the computer system, wherein the confidential information includes at least one previous location identifier; and
 allowing a user to review a filtered record for the group of animals that includes a present location identifier for a present location of the group of animals and that the

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group of animals occupied at least one previous location without disclosing the at least one previous location identifier.

43. The method according to claim **42** wherein the group identifier is included in a physical identifier for each animal in the group of animals.

44. The method according to claim **42** wherein information relating to the group of animals comprises prior history data and a group condition score.

¹⁰ **45.** The method according to claim **44** wherein information relating to the group of animals further comprises a breakdown of sex, age, breed, hide thickness, or any combination thereof.

¹⁵ **46.** The method according to claim **42** wherein the group identifier for each animal in the group of animals is the same.

47. The method according to claim **42** wherein the group identifier represents a premises arrival date.

48. The method according to claim **47** wherein the group identifier further represents a premises identifier.

²⁰ **49.** The method according to claim **42** wherein the group identifier for an animal represents a pen where the animal is contained.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 8,037,846 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 12/901815
DATED : October 18, 2011
INVENTOR(S) : William C. Pratt

Page 1 of 2

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

In the Specification:

In column 24, line 60, the word “provided” should be replaced with the words --are provided--.

In column 26, line 8, the word “is” should be --are--.

In column 30, line 45, the words “to be complete the” should be --to complete the--.

In column 32, line 63, the word “providing” should be --provide--.

In column 38, line 9, the word “refuel” should be --refuse--.

In column 38, line 17, the word “thus” should be --this--.

In column 55, line 8, the word “6FIGS.” should be --FIGS.--.

In column 55, Table 1, line 29, the numeric value “0/40” should be --0.40--.

In column 75, line 14, the words and punctuation “gate” at step 644” should be --gate”) at step 644--.

In column 76, lines 7-8, the words and punctuation ““make measurements” should be --“make measurements”--.

In column 78, line 9, the words “next 790 step” should be --next step 790--.

In column 96, line 24, the words “numbers are then be” should be --numbers are then--.

In column 96, line 62, the words “who known the” should be --who know the--.

In column 103, line 16, the words “can either perform” should be --can perform--.

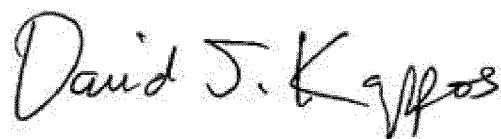
In column 105, line 46, the words “was then fix to” should be --was then fixed to--.

In column 105, line 56, the words “grade closely” should be --grade, closely--.

In column 114, line 63, the words and number “shown at 1” should be --shown at I--.

In column 115, line 44, the words “off Boost” should be --off. Boost--.

Signed and Sealed this
Sixth Day of November, 2012



David J. Kappos
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION (continued)
U.S. Pat. No. 8,037,846 B2

Page 2 of 2

In column 130, lines 40-41, the words "remain the unchanged" should be --remain unchanged--.

In the Claims:

In column 134, claim 6, line 11, the words "for with the" should be --for the--.