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(54) **COLLAR APPARATUS ENABLING SECURE HANDLING OF A SNAKE BY TETHER**

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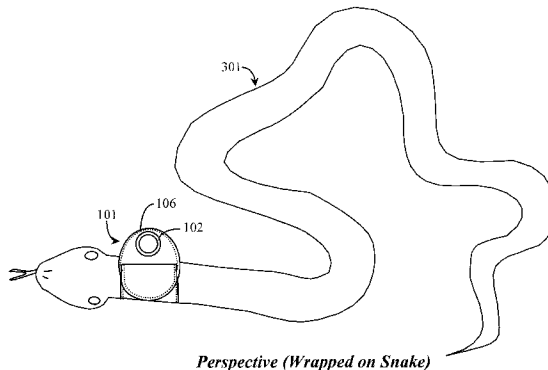
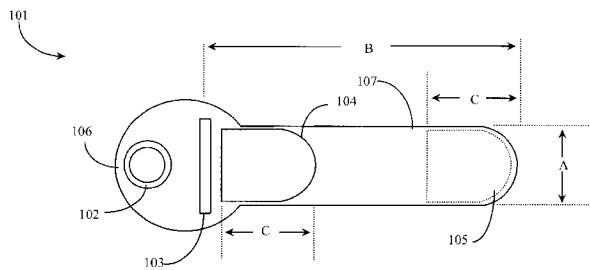
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A collar for collaring a snake has an elongated collar section forming a physical collar when wrapped around the body portion of the snake. The collar further has a support section for supporting an attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether and a connector system comprising at least two components affixed to strategic portions of the collar section for securing the collar in place around the body portion of the snake. The length of the collar section is such that a portion thereof overlaps itself when fitted around the snake providing an adjustable interface containing separate components of the connector system whereby mating the connector components together. secures the collar in place on the snake. In one embodiment the collar apparatus further includes a concertina movement-neutralization device for reducing concertina movement through the collar.

14 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



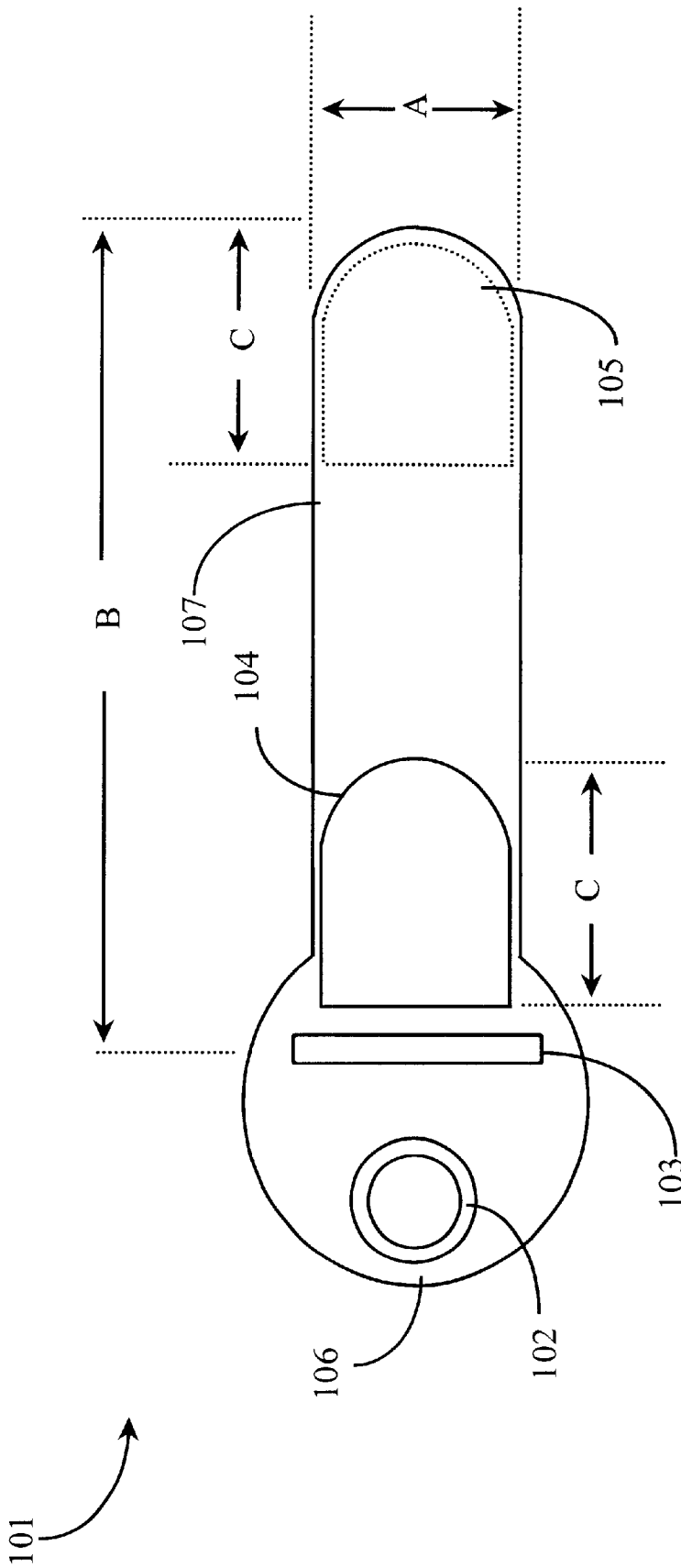


Fig. 1

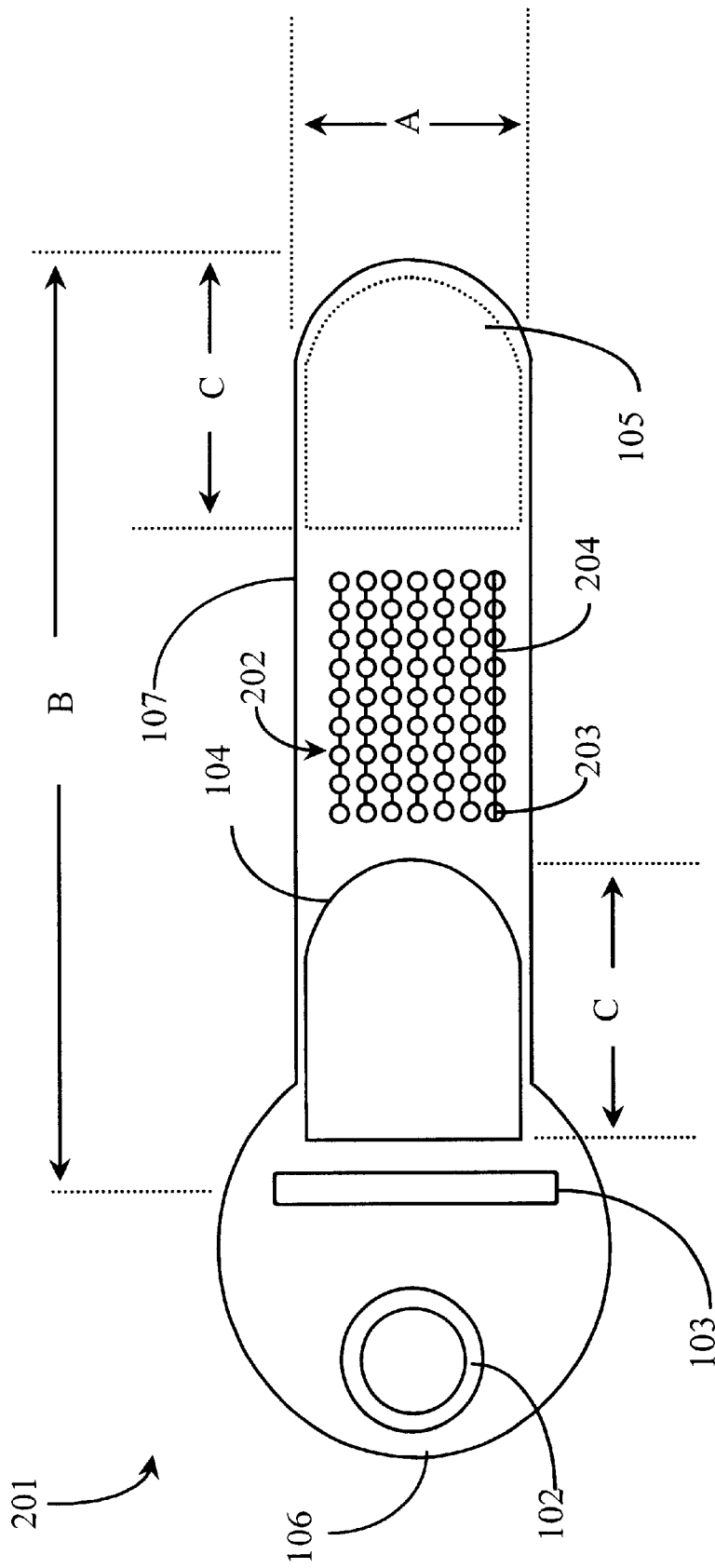


Fig. 2

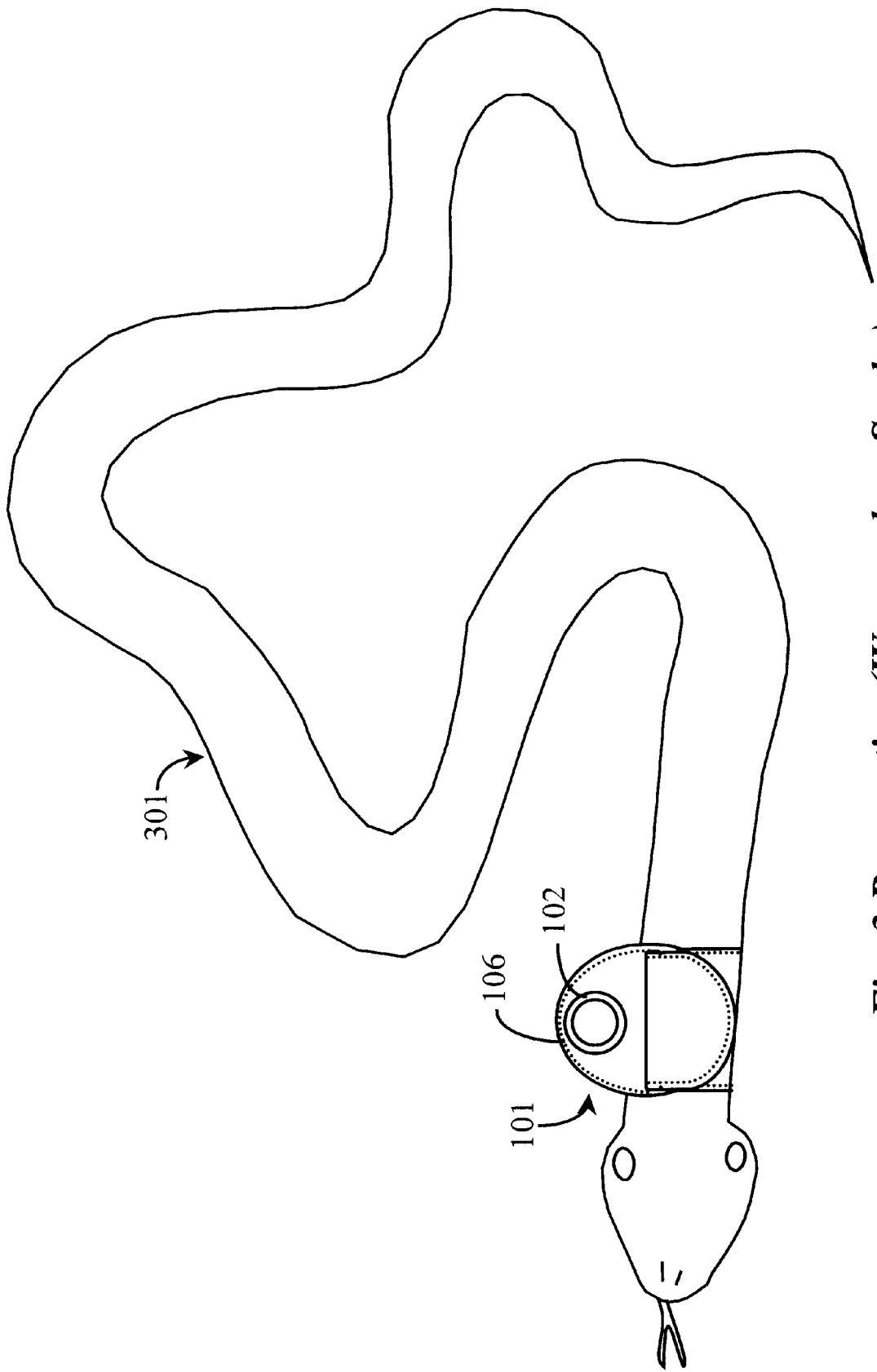


Fig. 3 Perspective (Wrapped on Snake)

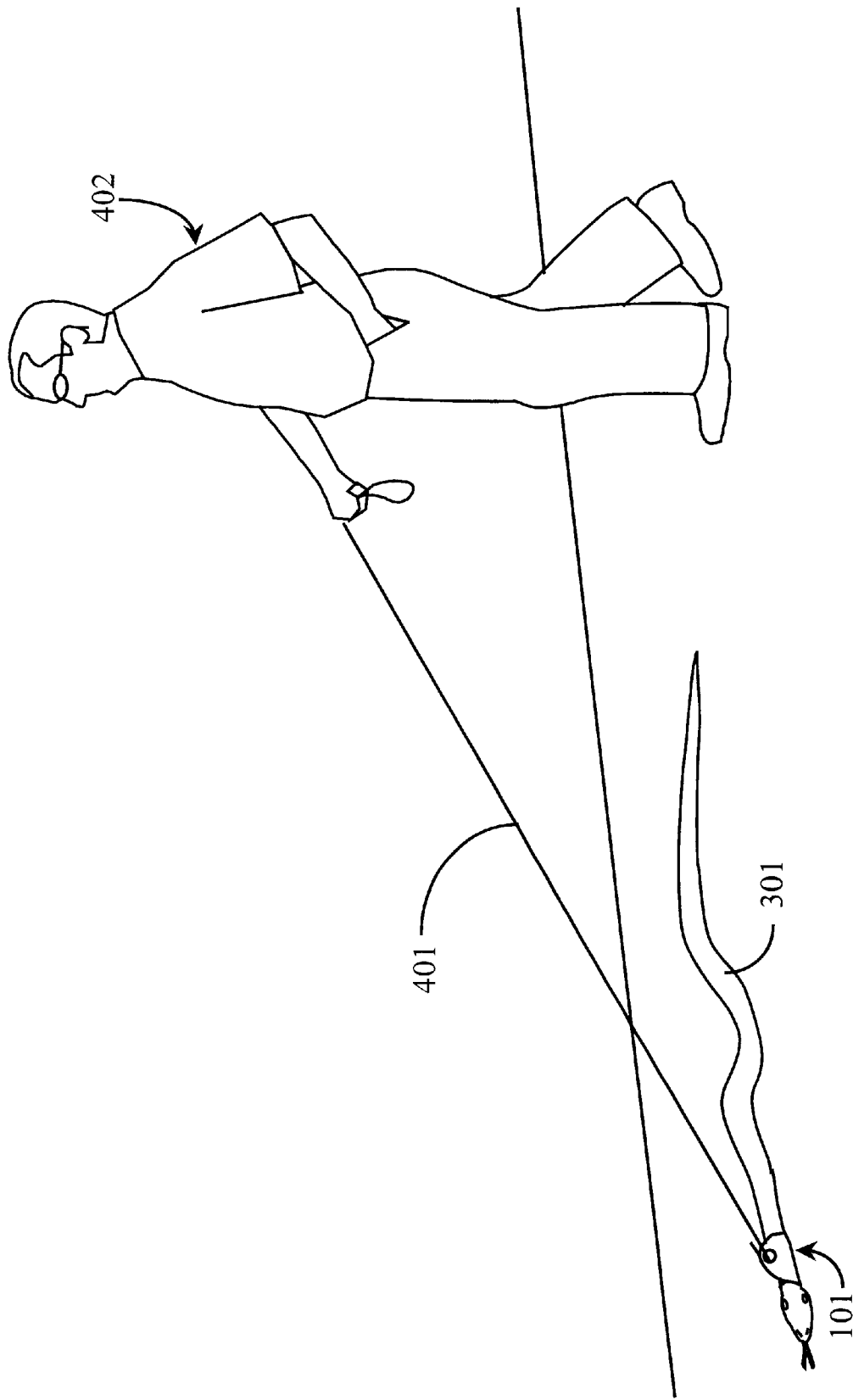


Fig. 4

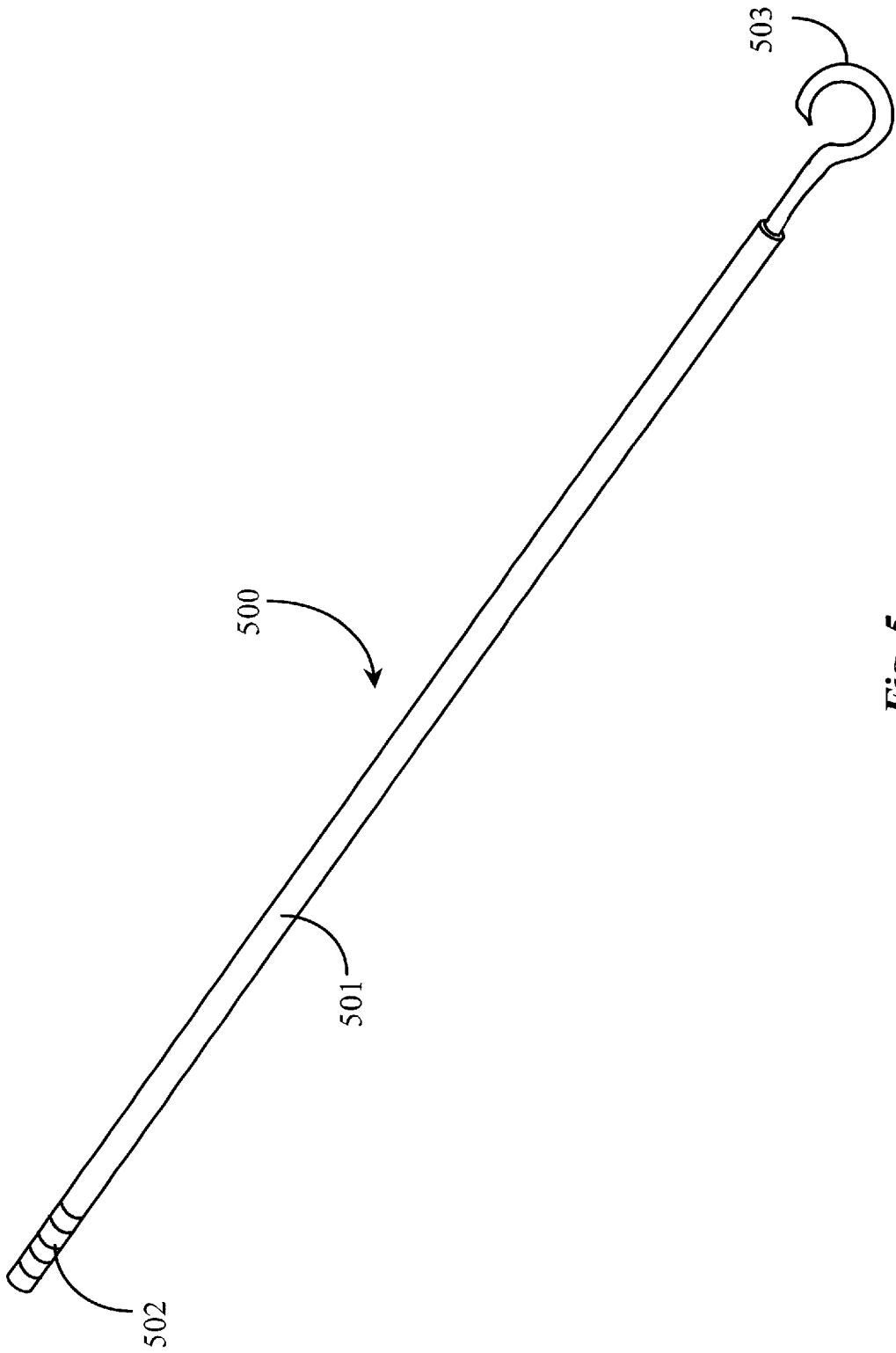


Fig. 5

COLLAR APPARATUS ENABLING SECURE HANDLING OF A SNAKE BY TETHER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is in the field of pet supplies and pertains more particularly to a collar apparatus for enabling tethering and subsequent walking of a pet snake away from its enclosure.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

There are many snake owners that do not spend much time handling their snakes. This is largely because they must hold them constantly while handling them for fear of losing control of them. Letting a snake go in a living room or outside can result in loss of the snake as it may slither into a crevice, hole, or other hideaway unnoticed making it difficult if not impossible to retrieve the snake.

As a result, most snakes are kept indoors year round under less than optimum lighting conditions (artificial light). It would be beneficial if snake owners could spend some outdoor time with their animals as it is known that natural sunlight and the warmth it produces is very beneficial to the epidermal health of any reptile. For example, a reptile getting more sunlight will have a better skin condition than one kept in the dark or in low light conditions.

Standard animal collars such as designed for dogs and cats as well as other legged animals are not designed for the body style of a snake because the snake has no external appendages. A snake exhibits concertina motion wherein the belly muscles of the snake act in concert to propel the snake in a forward direction. This type of forward motion is unique to a snake and is independent of any side-to-side serpentine movement. The concertina motion of a snake coupled with an ability to alter the shape of its circumference enables it to move through and escape any known annular restraint such as a neck-style collar.

Also, because of the ability of a snake to gradually change in size (circumference) due to food conditions and normal growth, it would be extremely difficult to collar the animal with a prior-art style collar that would always fit the animal.

In prior art there are no apparatus designed for collaring a snake so that it may be casually handled giving the snake freedom to move about without being held in the physical hands on sense.

Therefore, what is clearly needed is a collar apparatus and mechanism that enables a user to collar a snake securely such that it may be tethered and allowed to move about un-hindered in any area away from the snake's enclosure.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, a collar apparatus is provided for collaring a snake. The collar apparatus comprises, an elongated collar section forming a physical collar when wrapped around the circumference of a strategic body portion of the snake, a support section associated with the collar section, the support section for supporting an attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether and a connector system comprising at least two components affixed to strategic portions of the elongated section for securing the collar in place around the strategic body portion of the snake. The length of the collar section is such that a portion thereof overlaps itself when fitted around the snake providing an adjustable interface containing separate components of the connector system

whereby mating the connector components together secures the collar in place on the snake.

In a preferred aspect, the association of the support section with the collar section of the collar apparatus comprises components of the same material formed contiguously the support section occupying one end of the elongated section. Also in a preferred aspect, the attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of the tether is a ring supported by the material of the collar apparatus. In one aspect, the support section contains an elongated opening of a length longer than the width of the collar section such that the free end of the collar section may be inserted there through.

In another aspect of the present invention, a concertina movement-neutralization device is provided for reducing concertina movement of a snake through a collar apparatus, the collar apparatus having an elongated collar section forming a physical collar when wrapped around the circumference of a strategic body portion of the snake; a support section associated with the collar section, the support section for supporting an attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether; and a connector system comprising at least two components affixed to strategic portions of the elongated collar section for securing the collar in place around the strategic body portion of the snake. The concertina movement-neutralization device comprises, in a preferred aspect, a plurality of lengths of bead-chain arranged in substantially parallel rows, the beads enabled to rotate around their axis in a direction perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the collar section of the collar apparatus, wherein concertina movement forced against the beads causes the beads to rotate about their axis' reducing forward displacement of the snake through the collar apparatus.

In one aspect, the beads are elongated. In another aspect, the beads are annular. In one embodiment, the concertina movement-neutralization device is affixed to the collar section of the collar apparatus by sewing. In another aspect, the concertina movement-neutralization device is affixed to the collar section of the collar apparatus by staples. In yet another aspect, the concertina movement-neutralization device is affixed to the collar section of the collar apparatus by plastic snap-rings.

In still another aspect of the invention, a system for enabling collaring, tethering, and walking of a snake is provided the system comprising, a collar apparatus for collaring the snake, the collar apparatus including an elongated section forming a physical collar when wrapped around the circumference of a strategic body portion of the snake, a support section associated with the collar section, the support section for supporting an attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether and a connector system comprising at least two components affixed to strategic portions of the elongated section for securing the collar in place around a strategic body portion of the snake, a tether for attaching to the collar apparatus, and an elongated rod having a handle section strategically located at one end and a hook affixed to the end opposite the end supporting the handle section.

A user placing and securing the collar apparatus on a snake attaches the tether to the collared animal enabling the user to release the snake under control of the attached tether and wherein the elongated rod is used to provide an extra measure of control for retrieving the tethered snake or when changing the direction of movement of the tethered snake.

In still another aspect of the invention, a method is provided for collaring and tethering snake so that it may be

released under control of the tether. The method includes the steps of (a) positioning and securing a collar apparatus around the circumference of the snake a strategic location on the snake's body, (b) attaching a tether to the collar apparatus, and (c) releasing the snake under user control via the attached tether.

In a preferred aspect in step (a), the collar apparatus comprises an elongated collar section forming a physical collar when wrapped around the circumference of a strategic body portion of the snake, a support section associated with the collar section, the support section for supporting an attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether and a connector system comprising at least two components affixed to strategic portions of the elongated section for securing the collar in place around a strategic body portion of the snake.

In one aspect in step (a) the collar apparatus further comprises a concertina movement-neutralization device for reducing concertina movement of the snake through the collar apparatus.

Now for the first time, a collar apparatus and tethering system is provided for application to a snake enabling snake owners to collar, tether and safely release their snakes under control of the tether enabling the animal to move freely about without being handled in the hands-on sense and without fear of losing the animal.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

FIG. 1 is a plan view of a snake collar apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a plan view of the snake collar apparatus of FIG. 1 with a concertina neutralizing mechanism according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a use diagram illustrating the collar of FIG. 1 fitted on snake according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a use diagram illustrating the collar apparatus and snake of FIG. 3 in a tethered state under control of a user according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a plan view of an optional snake-retrieval stick according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

FIG. 1 is a plan view of a snake collar apparatus **101** according to an embodiment of the present invention. In a simplest embodiment, snake collar **101** is shaped of the form of a key having 2 architectural features provided in a contiguous fashion (of a same material). These are an annular support-section **106**, and a collar-section **107**. The key-shape design is a functional aspect of collar **101** in that it provided for a light-weight and flexible collar having a sufficient support means for a tether wherein no metallic parts touch a snake when collared.

Collar **101** is, in a preferred embodiment, fabricated of an industrial canvas fabric as is so labeled. In another embodiment, collar **101** may be fabricated of denim, leather, nylon, flexible polymer, or any other durable and flexible material. The manufactured size of collar **101** is somewhat contingent upon a target size of a snake but is adjustable to fit a range of circumferences. Dimension B is of a length to allow for a circumference of a snake's body just behind the head plus a length of overlap for securing collar **101** to itself. To this end, a section of Velcro or hook and loop fastener

Lock **105** is provided for removable attachment to a like section of Velcro or hook and loop fastener material **104**. An opening **103** is provided in support section **106** of collar **101** and is adapted to receive the end portion of collar section **107** there through in such a manner as to allow for Velcro or hook and loop fastener components **105** and **104** to be firmly pressed on to one another to form a secured loop of the collar apparatus.

A dimension C, illustrated herein as a length dimension applicable to both Velcro components is of such a length to allow for a certain size range of circumference dimension achieved when forming the collar around a particular snake. Therefore, a range of fit exists in collar **101** when applied to a snake. A dimension A, illustrated herein as a width dimension of collar section **107** is of such a width to allow for convenient insertion of the free end of section **107** through opening **103** provided in support section **106**. In this example, dimension A is also of a determined size to minimize the area of contact between the snake and the collar. For a medium to large snake 0.75 to 1.0 inches width is deemed preferable. For a smaller snake 0.75 to 0.5 is deemed preferable.

In other embodiments, dimension A may be larger or smaller than the above dimensions cited in this example. Through empirical testing, the inventor has found that the preferred dimensions provide a comfortable fit (not irritating the snake) while minimizing concertina movement of a snake through collar **101** when in place. Moreover, the preferred dimensions prevent a snake from achieving a break or otherwise compromising the secured Velcro or hook and loop fastener connection when the collar is in place.

In a preferred embodiment, Velcro or hook and loop fastener components **105** and **104** are sewn into their illustrated positions on collar **101**. In this example, Velcro or hook and loop fastener material **104** is face-up in this view while Velcro or hook and loop fastener lock **105** is sewn on the opposite side of collar section **107**. In one embodiment, Velcro lock **105** and Velcro or hook and loop fastener material **104** are glued to collar **101**, rather than sewn. In still another embodiment, mated plastic connectors that are secured by pressing them together may be used in place of a Velcro or hook and loop fastener connection. For very large and powerful snakes such as large pythons or Boas snaps may be used in place of or in addition to the Velcro or hook and loop fastener fastening method. The goal is to provide a secure and comfortable connection that may be adjusted to fit different circumferences.

Support section **106** of collar **101** has a grommet ring **102** pressed therein and adapted as a location for attaching a tether (not shown) thereto via a snap-ring mechanism or other known mechanism such as is common to animal tethers or leashes. Ring **102** in a preferred example is a grommet pressed into the fabric as illustrated. Ring **102** may be of a metallic, plastic, or other durable material. In another embodiment, ring **102** is simply an annular opening cut out of the canvass material and then reinforced by stitching around the periphery. In still another embodiment a ring may be provided that is capable of being separated at one portion similar to a key ring. In this case, the ring would be separated and inserted through a small opening in the canvass adapted for the purpose. There are many possibilities. When collar **101** is in place, ring **102** is separated from a snakes body and does not touch the animal.

In a preferred embodiment, support section **106** and collar section **107** are formed of the same piece of material in

contiguous fashion. However, in an alternate embodiment support section **106** may be provided as a separate piece from collar section **107**. In this embodiment the two sections may be sewn together or removably affixed together such as by snapping, hooking, or other methods.

One with skill in the art of fabric design will appreciate the significance of the key-shape implementation of this example. One benefit is that there are no square edges or sharp corners to contend with while walking a snake. Another benefit is that support section **106** supports grommet **102** a distance away from the body of a snake when collar **101** is in place eliminating any agitation that might occur due to intimate contact between a snake and hard parts of collar **101**. The overall design is efficient and produces minimum concern for the collared animal.

Through empirical testing, the inventor has determined that concertina movement ability of a snake through collar **101** as designed is limited to 1 to 1.5 inch displacement (from behind the head toward the tail) for a large snake of 5 to 6 feet in length. At the end of the displacement, collar **101** achieves a fit that is not tight enough to agitate the collared animal, but tight enough neutralize any further concertina travel through the collar. At this position, a collared snake is also unable to compromise the above-described Velcro or hook and loop fastener connection. Moreover, the scaled design of all snakes prevents them from backing out of collar **101**. After repeated collaring, it is found through testing that most snakes learn not to attempt concertina movement through the collar of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a plan view of the snake collar apparatus of FIG. 1 with a concertina neutralizing mechanism **202** affixed thereto according to another embodiment of the present invention. Collar **201** is an enhanced version of collar **101** as described in FIG. 1. Mechanism **202** is an enhancement that comprises an array of substantially parallel rows **204** of chained beads **203** strategically placed on and affixed to collar section **106** for the purpose of neutralizing any concertina motion through collar **201** when it is in place on an animal. Elements of this example that are also illustrated with regard to the example of FIG. 1 and that are not modified by mechanism **202** shall retain their same element numbers and shall not be reintroduced.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, beads **203** are metal beads that are enabled to rotate axially around their confining chain sections. Bead rows **204** are prepared to a determined length that depends on the overall size parameters of the collar that they will be affixed to and arranged in a parallel fashion such that the direction of rotation of each bead in each row is the same. Thus the direction of rotation of beads **203** is perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of collar **201**. Mechanism **202** may be prepared from traditional bead-chain available in most hardware stores for chaining bathroom fixtures. There exist a variety of sizes for different applications.

Each bead row **204** comprises individual beads **203** attached together by individual wire links. In this example, there are 7 bead-rows **204** provided to for mechanism **202**, however there may be more or fewer rows without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Similarly there may be more or fewer individual beads in each row **204** than is illustrated herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

Mechanism **202** on collar **201** serves as a concertina movement neutralization device that effectively stops any concertina movement through collar **201** and therefore any

displacement of the collar from an original positioning. Collar **201**, enhanced for concertina neutralization is especially useful on larger snakes and species that naturally have a higher concertina movement capability than other species. For example, Pythons and Boas have better concertina movement control than to species of Pine snake. Collar **201** is designed for larger snakes of 6 to 8 feet or more in length. However, mechanism **202** may be provided on collars that are designed for medium snakes as well without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. The specified size of beads **203** and the length and number of bead-rows **204** depend on size parameters of collar **201**.

When collar **201** is placed and secured around a snake, mechanism **202** has a position that substantially covers the belly portion of the snake. This is where muscles in the snake produce concertina movement by undulating in a direction toward the tail of the snake. When the snake attempts to move through collar **201**, beads **203** along the belly of the snake rotate about their axis neutralizing any forward motion through the collar. Although a certain amount of concertina movement through the collar of the present invention is acceptable, for larger animals, mechanism **202** provides an effective device for eliminating or substantially reducing such movement.

FIG. 3 is an overhead-view illustrating collar **101** of FIG. 1 placed in position on a snake **301** according to an embodiment of the present invention. A user (not shown) physically places collar **101** in position on snake **301** by physically positioning and wrapping the collar around the neck area of snake **301**, inserting the free end of the collar section through the opening provided in the support section and securing the Velcro or hook and loop fastener connection. Once collar **101** is secured in position on snake **301**, a leash or tether (not shown) is then attached to grommet **102** provided in support section **106**. Once the tether is attached, a user may release snake **301** safely. In one embodiment, collar **101** may be positioned onto snake **301** with a tether already attached to grommet **102**.

FIG. 4 is a use-diagram illustrating a user **402** walking behind and in control of snake **301** of FIG. 3 with collar **101** of FIG. 3 secured thereto with a tether **401** attached according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Once collar **101** has been positioned and secured on snake **301**, tether **401** is attached as was described with reference to FIG. 3 above. Snake **301** may then be released to roam about under tethered control of user **402**. Unlike other tethered animals, snake **301** will generally move in any direction it so desires and the proper position of user **402** is behind snake **301**. In a preferred embodiment, tether **401** is made of a simple and light nylon cord and has a lightweight snap hardware for attaching to collar **101**. In other embodiments tether **401** is made of braided rope or metallic chain or any other suitable material. It is preferred that any tether used be lightweight so as not to contribute any sense of restriction to snake **301** when collared. Although not shown in this example, an accessory comprising a stick with a hook at one end and a handle at the other end may be provided for quickly retrieving snake **301** or for changing its direction without user **402** being required to bend over to physically lift the animal with his or her hands. Such an apparatus will be briefly detailed below.

FIG. 5 is a diagram of a snake stick **500** that may be used while walking a snake according to embodiments of the present invention. Stick **500**, more properly termed a snake walking stick comprises an elongated rod **501**, a hooked apparatus **503**, and a handle section **502**. In a preferred

embodiment rod **501** is made of wood however in other embodiments, the rod **501** may be manufactured of any suitable material, including a metallic or plastic material.

Hooked apparatus **503** is rigidly affixed to one end of rod **501**. Apparatus **503** is hooked to an extent that a user may, while standing erect, insert the hook portion of apparatus **503** through a ring or grommet provided on the collar of the present invention for the purpose of exerting an extra measure of control over a tethered and collared animal. Hook **503** is preferably threaded at one end so that it may be screwed into the interface end of rod **501**. In other embodiments hook **503** may be of the same material as rod **501** such as a case of plastic wherein the hook portion may be a molded part thereof.

Handle section **502** may be of rubber or other cover material that may be glued or pressed onto rod **501** to form a comfortable handle. Handle **502** in one embodiment simply consists of groves cut into the wood or even tape material wrapped onto stick **500**.

Stick **500** when used according to embodiments of the present invention is useful for enabling quick retrieval of a snake in the event that some other curious and un-tethered animal such as a cat or dog happens upon a snake-walking session. It is also useful for changing the direction of a snake by hooking the ring or grommet on the support section of the collar and lifting the animal using the leverage of the stick while supporting the posterior of the animal with the opposite hand.

In a preferred embodiment, the collar of the present invention is provided with a suitable tether and snake stick as a snake walker kit available in local pet stores.

One with skill in the art of collaring and tethering techniques for legged animals will appreciate the functional difficulties of applying known tethering techniques to snakes and that further innovation and engineering is required as was taught herein in this specification to enable successful practice of collaring and tethering of any species of snake for recreational walking of the animal.

While the present invention has been described with reference to above illustrative embodiments, those skilled in the art will appreciate that various changes in form and detail may be made without departing from the intended scope of the present invention. For example, mechanism **202** described with reference to FIG. 2 may have beads **203** that are elongated beads rather than annular beads. Velcro or hook and loop fastener connections may be replaced with other known fastening mechanisms such as an array of snaps or male/female plastic connectors.

The method and apparatus of the present invention should be afforded the broadest scope under examination especially in light of its non-obvious nature concerning application to snakes, which having no legs, are not considered in the art as tether able animals. The spirit and scope of the present invention is limited only by the claims that follow.

What is claimed is:

1. A collar apparatus for collaring a snake comprising:
 - an elongated collar section forming a physical collar when wrapped around the circumference of a strategic body portion of the snake;
 - a support section associated with the collar section, the support section for supporting an attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether; and
 - a connector system comprising at least two components affixed to strategic portions of the elongated section for securing the collar in place around the strategic body portion of the snake;

characterized in that the length of the collar section is such that a portion thereof overlaps itself when fitted around the snake providing an adjustable interface containing separate components of the connector system whereby mating the connector components together secures the collar in place on the snake and wherein the key-shape design of the collar provides a light-weight and flexible collar wherein no metallic parts touch a snake when collared.

2. The collar apparatus of claim 1 wherein the association of the support section with the collar section comprises components of the same material formed contiguously the support section occupying one end of the elongated section.

3. The collar apparatus of claim 1 wherein the attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of the tether is a ring supported by the material of the collar apparatus.

4. The collar apparatus of claim 1 wherein the support section contains an elongated opening of a length longer than the width of the collar section such that the free end of the collar section may be inserted there through.

5. A concertina movement-neutralization device for reducing concertina movement of a snake through a collar apparatus, the collar apparatus having an elongated collar section forming a physical collar when wrapped around the circumference of a strategic body portion of the snake; a support section associated with the collar section, the support section for supporting an attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether; and a connector system comprising at least two components affixed to strategic portions of the elongated collar section for securing the collar in place around the strategic body portion of the snake comprising:

a plurality of lengths of bead-chain arranged in substantially parallel rows, the beads enabled to rotate around their axis in a direction perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the collar section of the collar apparatus, wherein concertina movement forced against the beads causes the beads to rotate about their axes reducing forward displacement of the snake through the collar apparatus.

6. The concertina movement-neutralization device of claim 5 wherein the beads are elongated.

7. The concertina movement-neutralization device of claim 5 wherein the beads are annular.

8. The concertina movement-neutralization device of claim 5 affixed to the collar section of the collar apparatus by sewing.

9. The concertina movement-neutralization device of claim 5 affixed to the collar section of the collar apparatus by staples.

10. The concertina movement-neutralization device of claim 5 affixed to the collar section of the collar apparatus by plastic snap-rings.

11. A system for enabling collaring, tethering, and walking of a snake comprising:

a collar apparatus for collaring the snake, the collar apparatus including an elongated section forming a physical collar when wrapped around the circumference of a strategic body portion of the snake, a support section associated with the collar section, the support section for supporting an attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether and a connector system comprising at least two components affixed to strategic portions of the elongated section for securing the collar in place around a strategic body portion of the snake and wherein the key-shape design of the collar provides a light-weight and flexible collar wherein no metallic parts touch a snake when collared;

a tether for attaching to the collar apparatus; and
 an elongated rod having a handle section strategically
 located at one end and a hook affixed to the end
 opposite the end supporting the handle section;
 characterized in that a user placing and securing the collar
 apparatus on a snake attaches the tether to the collared
 animal enabling the user to release the snake under
 control of the attached tether and wherein the elongated
 rod is used to provide an extra measure of control for
 retrieving the tethered snake or when changing the
 direction of movement of the tethered snake.
12. A method for collaring and tethering snake so that it
 may be released under control of the tether the method
 comprising steps of:
 (a) positioning and securing a collar apparatus around the
 circumference of the snake a strategic location on the
 snake's body;
 (b) attaching a tether to the collar apparatus; and

(c) releasing the snake under user control via the attached
 tether.

13. The method of claim **12** wherein in step (a) the collar
 apparatus comprises an elongated section forming a physical
 collar when wrapped around the circumference of a strategic
 body portion of the snake, a support section associated with
 the collar section, the support section for supporting an
 attachment mechanism for accepting attachment of a tether
 and a connector system comprising at least two components
 affixed to strategic portions of the elongated section for
 securing the collar in place around a strategic body portion
 of the snake.

14. The method of claim **12** wherein in step (a) the collar
 apparatus further comprises a concertina movement-
 neutralization device for reducing concertina movement of
 the snake through the collar apparatus.

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