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INVENTION

Patents of the Week

The Official Gazette of the Patent Office read like a nature handbook as patents for harvesting nuts, protecting oysters and fumigating birds were granted—By Elizabeth Hall

► LIKE EVERYONE ELSE in the fall, the U.S. Patent Office is turning to Mother Nature for inspiration.

Patents for harvesting nuts, protecting oysters from shrimp, aging cheese, fumigating birds, killing mice and dry-cleaning eggs were among 732 recent patents issued.

The nut-harvesting machines are the creation of Dewey L. Anderson and Wayne H. Woods of Monroe, La. One circular machine surrounds a tree to catch the nuts as they fall, separates the nuts from twigs and leaves, and conveys the nuts to storage.

Another nut-harvesting machine acts somewhat like a vacuum cleaner in scooping up nuts lying on the ground by suction and conveying them to storage. The two inventors were awarded patents 3,105,343, 3,105,344 and 3,105,347.

Anti-Mouse Board

An anti-mouse board for repelling and killing mice, that is, at the same time, neat and attractive to the housewife, earned patent 3,105,321 for Karl Paul Link of Middleton, Wis. Patent rights were assigned to the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation of Madison.

The board is made of absorbent paper card or corrugated board and covered with the rodenticide warfarin and its derivatives. An animal, fish or vegetable glue is sprayed on the board to hold in place grains of corn, wheat, barley, rice or rye. Mice are attracted to the boards instead of feed sacks or food if they are placed in the same room.

Examples of anti-mouse boards that could be made at home are listed in the patent.

Oyster Bed Protection

A Washington inventor has revised an earlier patent of his to keep burrowing shrimp from ruining oyster grounds. Shrimp sour the ground and displace the layer of silt covering the tide lands where oysters are grown. In patent 3,105,461, John L. Wiegardt Jr. of Ocean Park has changed his first idea of plowing the tide lands to a three-stage rolling process.

Drawn behind tractors, the first roller hardens the ground; the second thumps up and down to numb the shrimp underneath. The dazed shrimp crawl to the surface and are eaten by sea gulls. The third roller forms a surface crust over the ground suffocating any shrimp left below.

John Shaw of Bristol, England, earned U.S. patent 3,105,253 for his method of dry cleaning eggs that allows the eggs to retain their natural sealing material against bacteria, rot and mold. The eggs are held in pockets against a band of foam and rotated in a circle, while a mop attached in the

center cleans the eggs for packaging. Patent rights were assigned to the Tungum Company of Arle, England.

A process for making natural aged cheddar cheese in six months instead of a year earned patent 3,105,764 for Raymond G. Wagner of Weyauwega, Wis. In Mr. Wagner's process, citric acid or the inorganic salt sodium citrate is added to the raw, heat-treated milk before or along with the bacteria culture.

A vacuum process speeds up the aging process by removing the gas from the ripening cheese and sealing the slits to prevent more from entering. The whole treatment accentuates the cheddar flavor and blend.

Two Florida inventors have developed an artificial bird companion and fumigant dispenser that received patent 3,105,464. The artificial bird is hollow on the inside and contains tablets of disinfecting chemicals. The bird is fastened on one side of the live bird's swinging perch.

As the real bird sits on his perch, the pressure of air or the vacuum created, depending on which way the perch swings, releases fumes inside the artificial bird and fumigates the live bird. The device was designed by Peter J. Scray and Cary Crews of Jacksonville.

Ore Detecting Device

A detection device called a "bird" that looks like a bullet or a missile, earned patent 3,105,934 for Anthony Rene Barringer of Agincourt, Ontario, Canada. The "bird" is towed along behind a plane, radiating short wave pulses to the ground where bodies of ore might be located. The pulses create electromagnetic fields in the ore bodies that send signals back to the "bird."

A radar altimeter simultaneously records the flying altitude in relation to the earth's geophysical profile so that the depth of ore bodies is known, while a camera photographs the ground being surveyed. This system allows detection of bodies of ore from a distance.

Other Significant Patents

A household still for drinking water and other beverages received design patent 196,108 for Gary A. Gerber of Bridgeport, Conn. Rights were assigned to American Machine and Foundry Company.

A device that determines and matches electronically the position of one map with another, for example, a radar map with a reference map earned a patent. Joseph B. Mihelich of Inglewood, Calif., assigned rights to patent 3,102,260 to North American Aviation, Inc.

• Science News Letter, 84:254 Oct. 19, 1963