

✎ If the setting is not conducive to proper preparation, the animal should be moved to a location that is more appropriate.

🔑 One of the author's greatest frustrations, is being presented with a horse that has a career-ending or life-threatening wound that was missed due to improper preparation. While the animal might have had a good prognosis from a practitioner's thorough preparation, cleaning and exploration, a poor prognosis resulted from insufficient technique. The old axiom holds true that many more things are missed for not looking than for not knowing.

✓ After the wound has been cleaned, it is time to perform a complete exploration.

✎ If the animal has not been sedated or local anesthesia has not been performed, this is generally a time when the animal will react. If the systemic status of the animal is acceptable, sedation will make the practitioner's job easier and will maximize the exploration.

🔑 If the animal is moving too much, the practitioner must do whatever is necessary to limit movement. Local anesthetic can be very useful in doing so.

🌀 It is the practitioner's responsibility to do whatever it takes to provide the best circumstances for a complete and thorough exploration. It is not acceptable to settle for second best when it comes to wound exploration. A thorough exploration in some cases will only require the practitioner's hands and eyes. In other cases, the exploration will require adjunct diagnostic tools such as radiography and ultrasonography.

## Head Wounds

✓ Head wounds can provide a diagnostic challenge, yet it is very important to understand the extent of the injury. Never assume that the wound is only superficial until a complete wound exploration has confirmed that.

♥ In one case, a horse had been spooked during a storm and was presented to the referring veterinarian the following day for a small wound between the ear and the eye. The wound was not clipped or explored. The horse was placed on antibiotics but did not improve. Eventually the wound was more thoroughly explored, and a tree branch approximately 3/4 inch in diameter and 4 inches long was found in the soft tissues behind the eye.

The horse lost the eye and was eventually euthanized. Digital exploration and/or the use of ultrasound, may have led to the discovery of the stick, providing faster, more appropriate, treatment.

✓ Thorough exploration should rule out fractures (Figure 3-3), penetrations into the sinuses, lacerated salivary ducts (Figure 3-4), tongue lacerations, and injuries to the eyes.



**Figure 3-3**  
Picture of a severe head laceration involving the bony orbit and the eye.



**Figure 3-4** Picture of a horse with a throat latch laceration.