



DANGEROUS COCKTAIL:
Green turtles on the Great Barrier Reef are at risk from high chemical levels.

SHELLSHOCK AS CHEMICALS KILL REEF TURTLES

BRIAN WILLIAMS

TURTLES near urban and farming areas on the Great Barrier Reef are absorbing possibly thousands of chemicals.

Scientists trying to work

out why more than 100 green turtles died in June and July 2012 at Upstart Bay near Ayr, took blood samples from 1131 animals, finding a range of chemicals associated with industry and agriculture.

They included cobalt, molybdenum and anti-mony and high levels of stress-related compounds that often are a sign of chemical exposure.

University of Queensland scientists think a

combination of chemicals rather than one particular substance might be impacting the creatures.

These findings go to the heart of a five-year conservation campaign for better Reef care, which has ar-

gued that flows from farms, mines, industry and urban areas must be cut.

Turtles were also surveyed in the relatively pristine Howick Group of Islands as well as Upstart and Cleveland bays.

University of Queensland Associate Professor Caroline Gaus said tests indicated turtles from Upstart Bay also had signs of systemic stress with markedly higher inflammatory responses.