



# Effect of cigarette butt pollution on marine life

Each cigarette contains more than 3,900 chemicals including nicotine, cyanide, ammonia, cadmium, acetone and arsenic. Cigarette butts contain the toxic residue of these. The most recent 'Clean Up Australia' Rubbish report indicates cigarette butts are the most common item of litter collected at 12% (45,912).

It is known that seabirds, turtles and some fish ingest butts. As the butts swell in the stomach of the animal they cause false satiation. The animal, believing it is full, refrains from eating and eventually starves to death.

This has been reported for many sea turtles in QLD and NSW. Fisheries officers also have evidence that the 'dolphin fish' in particular, ingests butts

## Effects of toxic chemicals on marine life

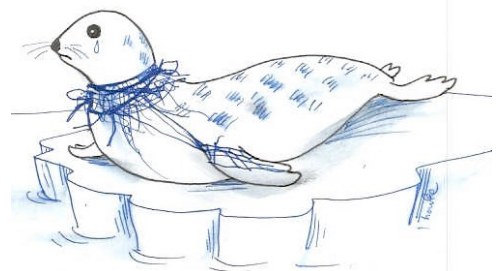
Chemically combined chlorine and carbon form 'organochlorins' which include PCB's DDT and DDE. These are found in pesticides, paints, paper and fluorescent lights and make their way into the marine environment together with heavy metals, from land based sources such as agriculture run-off, industrial waste and sewerage.

Because marine mammals like dolphins are at the top of the food train, and because they have the most blubber which is where toxins concentrate, they build up the highest levels of contaminants. The effect of these contaminants on marine mammals include: tumors, immune system breakdown resulting in outbreaks of viruses, abnormal growth, and reproductive disorders such as still births, and calf mortality due to toxins passing through the mothers milk.

## Effect of plastics on marine life

It is proven that many plastics and synthetics can last for decades in the marine environment. Entanglement in fishing nets can cause death to marine life by drowning, or more slowly by strangulation, preventing the animal from catching food or escaping predators. '69 out of 280 species of sea birds are known to consume plastic wastes. A study of Albatross chicks on a remote pacific atoll, found 90% had plastic pieces in their gullets.' (EPA 1999)

According to the EPA, a six-pack holder will be around for 450 years, plastic bags for 20 years and cigarette butts for 3 years in the marine environment. Birds and fish get caught up in six-pack rings and turtles and dolphins ingest plastic bags mistaking them for jellyfish. Once the animal dies and decays, the plastic is free to repeat the cycle.



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