

Help when things turn turtle



SHELL-shocked . . . Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors rescue a green turtle, and, below, the turtle dubbed Trident on the boat.

Rosemary Desmond

A 104kg female turtle is recovering at Australia Zoo on the Sunshine Coast after it was rescued on the same day that a newly rehabilitated male turtle was released.

The female green turtle was found in distress in deep water off Mooloolaba on the Sunshine Coast on Monday by Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors and taken back to the zoo's Australian Wildlife Hospital where carers named her Trident.

She was discovered floating in the sea, unable to dive to catch food.

On January 5, the Wildlife Warriors found a 94kg male green turtle, estimated to be about 100 years old, washed up on Coolum Beach.

He had heavy rope wrapped around his lacerated neck and remaining front flipper.

The turtle, later given the name Percy, had already lost one flipper which remained only as 15cm of bare protruding bone.

AWH manager Gail Gipp said Percy and Trident were lucky to be found alive.

"Coccidia or blood fluke (parasites) and obstructions in the intestines such as



ingested pollution, cause a large amount of gas to accumulate under the shell, causing them to float," Ms Gipp said.

"Once weakness, dehydration, hunger and barnacles set in, the turtles get so sick that they are commonly washed ashore."

Percy was released on Monday in deep water and away from shipping lanes to give him the best chance of survival.

Ms Gipp said every year thousands of marine turtles became entangled in fish netting, drum and fishing lines or ingested man-made rubbish such as plastic bags and cigarette butts.

The Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors, of which the AWH is a part, was set up in 2002 by Steve and Terri Irwin at Australia Zoo.