Technical Report No. 277 SMALL MAMMAL STUDIES ON JORNADA AND PANTEX SITES, 1972

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GRASSLAND BIOME

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ABSTRACT

Small mammal population studies were continued on the Jornada and Pantex Sites using sampling methods identical to those used in 1971. Rodent populations at Pantex overwintered at rather high densities, but gradually declined throughout the summer and autumn. Cotton rats, Sigmodon hispidus, appeared in significant numbers in the ungrazed sampling plot in spring 1972. This appearance followed the preceding autumn of good aboveground live and dead vegetation resulting from increased precipitation in the summer and autumn of 1971; this was also coupled to a mild winter for 1971-1972. Lagomorph populations at Pantex remained about the same whereas at the Jornada black-tailed jackrabbits, Lepus californicus, were fewer in number than in 1971. Rodent population density at the Jornada remained low although there was some indication of a late autumn increase following increased precipitation in late summer and autumn of 1972.

Rodent population density fluctuations seem closely correlated to fluctuations in precipitation on both sites.

INTRODUCTION

Population dynamics of small mammals (rodents and lagomorphs) were studied and biomass estimates made for 1972. The design of the studies on rodents is in French (1971), whereas the lagomorph density and biomass estimates are in Packard (1972). The data reported herein were collected from the Comprehensive Network Sites at Pantex and Jornada. The objectives of the 1972 studies were: (1) estimate population densities (crude) of rodents and lagomorphs using techniques developed in 1970 and 1971; (2) convert population density estimates into biomass estimates; (3) continue studies of reproductive conditions of small mammals; (4) collect stomach materials from sacrificed specimens for food studies; and (5) analyze functional impact of key species of rodents on intensive study sites.

Sampling was conducted as in 1971 with four periods (early May, late June to early July, mid-August, and late November) on both sites simultaneously. All live-trap data were collected from 1970-1971 live-trap plots (see Packard 1971, 1972). Similar habitat to the live-trap plots were snap-trapped to obtain specimens for purposes of weight, reproductive tract study, and the collection of stomachs. All sacrificed specimens were preserved as museum study skins or as whole specimens in Formalin. The specimens are deposited at The Museum, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas. Graduate students assisting me in the field and laboratory were K. G. Matocha, T. R. Mollhagen, R. W. Wiley, and D. R. Womochel.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All procedures for the 1972 studies at Jornada and Pantex were identical to those in 1971 (Packard 1971, 1972). The only additional technique utilized in the 1972 studies was the addition of assessment

lines. These were placed in such a way that the trap lines extended well beyond the margins of the regular grid pattern (for design of assessment line patterns see Fig. 1 and Smith et al. 1971). It was hoped that data collected from the assessment lines would reflect more accuracy than previous data on the density of the small mammal population.

Seed selection preference studies were conducted in the laboratory. Spotted ground squirrels, Spermophilus spilosoma, and Ord's kangaroo rats, Dipodomys ordii, were live-trapped at the Jornada and brought to the laboratory for use in these studies. The laboratory was maintained at 22°C with a constant 55% relative humidity. Incident light was monitored to correspond with the known cycle of the Jornada. The enclosure or pen used in the laboratory was 8' × 8' × 3' (depth). Soil from the Jornada was used as a base. Water was provided ad libatum. A total of 10 g of seeds were provided the animal every 48 hours. Two trays of equal size and access were placed on the soil surface; each tray contained 5 g of seed. At the conclusion of each 48 hour period the remaining seeds (if any) were weighed. Scattered seeds were gathered and weighed also. Different combinations of seeds were presented to each animal.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Population density of rodents were made using a modified Zippin (1956, 1958) method adjusted to the use of live-trap data. Density estimates were converted into biomass estimates by multiplying the average density by species times the average weight for that species based on sacrificed specimens. Conversion of wet body weight to dry body weight was accomplished by multiplying weight wet times 0.3 (see

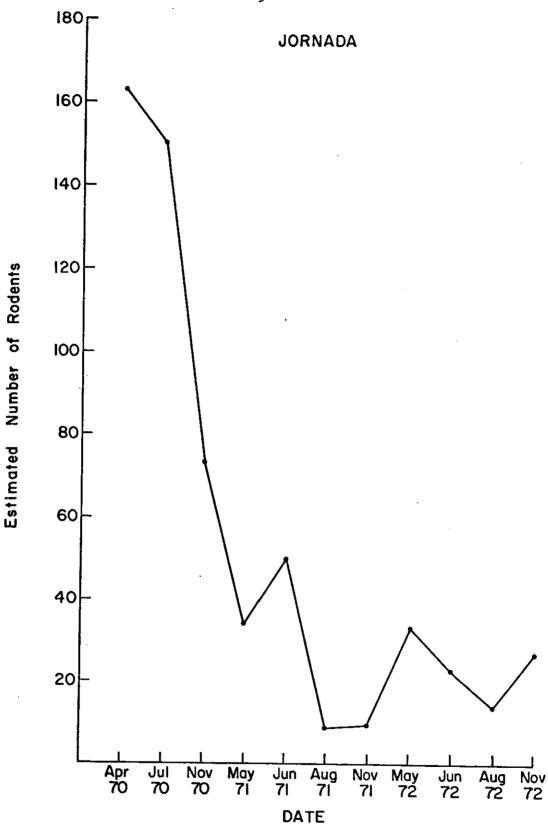


Fig. 1. Changes in density of the rodent population over a 3-year period at the Jornada. Numbers on the ordinate represent the estimated (using a modified Zippin analysis) number of rodents, all species, present on the study plot.

Golley 1960). Lagomorphs were censused along the same routes as in 1971 (Packard 1971, 1972). Densities of lagomorphs were estimated using the same procedures as in 1971.

STUDY AREAS

Jornada Site

The live-trap study plot was in the same position as in the 1970-1971 studies. Vegetation for that area has been previously described (see Packard 1971, Herbel and Pieper 1971). Principal change on the live-trap plot took place in August 1972 through autumn when precipitation increased to a point to permit a good growth of black grama, dropseed, and other grasses. Aboveground live vegetation seemed to grow more than at any time since the onset of small mammal studies in 1970. This year as in 1971, specimens were snap-trapped from areas peripheral to the live-trap area (in Jornada pasture no. 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 12). Some limited mammal collecting was conducted in areas adjacent to the Jornada Site.

Pantex Site

The live-trap plot was in the same position as the 1970-1971 studies. Vegetation on the live-trap plot increased in ground cover and density owing to increased precipitation and cessation of grazing. The vegetation was particularly luxuriant in the spring of 1972, but waned through the summer as precipitation decreased. There was less small mammal cover in the late summer of 1972 than in the spring of that year. Specimens were collected with snap traps in sites adjacent to the live-trap plot as well as in the area of the on-site IBP laboratory.

RESULTS OF CENSUS SAMPLING

Jornada Site

Sampling dates for live-trapping and assessment lines were May 9 to 19, June 27 to July 6, August 14 to 24, and November 18 to 28. The following species were collected in the four sampling periods by (i) live-trapping: Dipodomys ordii, D. merriami, D. spectabilis, Perognathus merriami, P. apache, P. penicillatus, and Spermophilus spilosoma; and (ii) snap-trapping for the collecting program: Lepus californicus, Sylvilagus auduboni, Dipodomys ordii, D. merriami, D. spectabilis, Perognathus apache, P. penicillatus, P. flavus, Spermophilus spilosoma, Onychomys leucogaster, and Neotoma micropus.

The most abundant species on the live-trap plat were Dipodomys ordii, D. spectabilis, and Perognathus apache (See Tables 1 and 2). Spermophilus spilosoma was probably present in greater numbers than our data show. The night trapping schedule did not lend itself to the estimation of density of diurnal species such as the spotted ground squirrel. There was a significant increase of D. merriami in the mesquite-sand hills in pastures 4 and 8. This increase was noted particularly in May 1972.

Pantex Site

Sampling dates were the same as those at Jornada. Species collected in the four sampling periods by (i) live-trapping: Peromyscus maniculatus, Reithrondontomys montanus, R. megalotis, Sigmodon hispidus, Perognathus flavescens, P. merriami, P. hispidus, Spermophilus tridecemlineatus, and Mus musculus; and (ii) snap-trapping and collecting program Peromyscus maniculatus, Reithrodontomys montanus, R. megalotis, Onychomys leucogaster, Sigmodon hispidus, Perognathus hispidus, P. flavus, and Mus musculus.

Table 1. Biomass of rodents based on densities estimated from live-trap data, Jornada Site, 1972.

Species Population Dipodomys ordii 12.6 D. spectabilis 3.0 Spermophilus spilosoma 2.2 Ferograthus apache 6.8 P. merriami 1.0 P. penicillatus Species Population Dipodomys ordii 5.1	g/study on wet 588.2 360.0 251.5 116.2 9.0	34 34 34 34 34 34 34 34 34 34 34 34 34 3	8i 215.2 (9/ha 215.2 (9/ha 215.2 (9/ha 215.2 (9/ha 215.2 (9/ha 21.5 21.5 21.5 21.5 21.5 21.5 21.5 21.5	dry 64.6	Population	g/study	a.	Biomass	g/ha
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1.0 Population 5.1	9.0	34.8	3.2	27.4	;	ţ	į	:	:
Population 5.1	9.0	3.0	3.2	12.7	5.1	87.2	26.1	37.4	11.2
Population 5.1	1	:	:	1.0	i	}	i	:	ł
s Population				;	1.	ì	1	ŧ	:
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-	278.5	83.5	100.5	30.1	0.4	179.2	53.7	64.9	19.4
1.7	252.0	75.6	92.4	7.72	5.5	0.099	198.0	239.1	71.7
Spermophilus spilosoma	i i	;	;	ŀ	4.0	9.404	121.4	146.5	43.9
Perognathus apache 7.8	133.3	40.0	78.6	14.6	1.0	17.1	5.1	6.1	80
P. merriami	:	:	1	ŀ	11.0	110.0	33.0	39.8	11.9
P. penicillatus	i	1	1	;	1.0	10.4	3.1	3.7	:

Table 2. Average small mammal (rodent) standing crop biomass, 1972

		Biomass	
Sampling Period	Wet wt (g/ha)	Dry wt (g/ha)	Dry wt (g/m ²)
	Jornada		
May 9-13	760.1	228.0	0.022
June 27 - July 1	415.8	124.7	0.012
August	441.8	132.5	0.013
November	730.6	219.1	0.021
	Pantex		
May 9-13	1252.4	375.7	0.037
June 26-30	1153.3	346.0	0.034
August 14-18	1128.2	338.4	0.033
November 18-22	401.3	120.3	0.012

The increase in density of the vegetation may have accounted for the changes in abundance of various species of small mammals. The cotton rat, Sigmodon hispidus, was the most abundant in numbers in the spring as well as being the most important in biomass (see Tables 2 and 3). Cotton rats continued as the most important species until autumn when Peromyscus maniculatus became the most abundant in numbers and most important in biomass. Reithrodontomys megalotis was the most abundant of all species numerically in the spring, but by autumn their numbers had waned and R. montanus had become second only to Peromyscus in numbers.

RESULTS OF LAGOMORPH CENSUS

Jornada Site

Lagomorphs were censused in May, July, August, and November.

Populations of jackrabbits and cottontails and resulting biomass on a g/ha basis were somewhat less than in 1971 (see Table 4). Although vegetation sustained good growth in late summer and autumn, this seemed to have little impact on the jackrabbit population. However, cottontails were more abundant in the autumn than at any previous census time (see Table 4).

Pantex Site

The principal difference detected at Pantex in the jackrabbit population was an increase in the late summer sample. Perhaps this increase could be correlated to the luxuriant growth of vegetation in the preceding spring. Otherwise, populations of jackrabbits and cottontails remained about the same as in 1971 (see Table 4).

Table 3. Blomass of rodents based on densities estimated from live-trap data, Pantex Site, 1972.

Species Peromyscus maniculatus Sigmodon hispidus Reithrodontomys megalotis R. montanus	Population	10/0	Bio	Biomass				Bio	Biomass	
Species Peromyscus maniculatus Sigmodon hispidus Reithrodontomys megalotis R. montanus	Population	100								
Species Peromysaus maniculatus Sigmodon hispidus Reithrodontomys megalotis R. montanus	Population	9/ 2/10	g/study area	/5	g/ha	·	g/stu	g/study area	/6	g/ha
Peromyscus maniculatus Sigmodon hispidus Reithrodontomys megalotis R. montanus	78.2	wet	dry	wet	dry	Population	wet	dry	wet	dry
Sigmodon hispidus Reithrodontomys megalotis R. montanus	1	469.7	140.9	171.6	51.5	17.4	398.6	119.5	145.5	43.6
Reithrodontomys megalotis R. montanus	15.8	1088.1	326.4	397.4	119.2	45.4	3331.4	999.4	1215.9	364.8
R. montanus	39.0	762.0	228.6	278.0	83.4	16.0	243.0	72.9	88.7	26.6
	10.4	108.1	32.4	39.5	1.8	;	:	ì	;	;
Mus musculus	3.8	88.2	26.4	32.7	9.7	ł	:	:	;	i
Perognathus flavescens	:	1	;	;	;	1.0	8.0	2.4	2.9	0.9
P. hispidus	;	;	:	:	;	;	ł	1	ł	;
P. merriami	;	ŧ	;	;		1	;	;	;	ł
Spermophilus spilosoma	;	ł	;	}	1	ł	1	1	i	1
		¥	August				Nov	November		
			Biomass	ass				Biomass	1955	
		g/study	ly area	g/ha	ļ ģ		g/study	y area	g/ha	g
Species.	Population	wet	dry	wet	dry	Population	wet	dry	wet	dry
Peromyscus maniculatus	39.0	930.5	279.1	339.5	101.8	34.6	598.2	179.4	216.7	65.0
Sigmodon hispidus	18.0	1184.7	1	432.4	129.7	6.2	358.3	107.5	129.8	38.9
Reithrodontomys megalotis	14.4	281.3	84.4	102.8	30.8	3.2	34.2	- 10.2	12.3	3.7
R. montanus	2.0	20.8	6.2	7.6	2.3	20.0	165.0	49.5	59.7	17.9
Mus musculus	;	ţ	;	:	;	ł	;	1	!	ŀ
Perognathus flavescens	2.0	18.8	9.6	6.9	2.1	:	;	;	;	;
P. hispidus	3.4	112.3	33.7	41.0	12.3	;	;	•	;	;
P. merriami	4.0	40.0	12.0	14.6	4.3	;	ţ	;	1	!
Spermophilus spilosoma	1.0	80.0	24.0	28.8	8.6	ł	:	:	:	:

Table 4. Seasonal estimates of biomass of lagomorphs on the Jornada and Pantex Sites.

		Biomass (g/	ha)		
	Lep	rus call record	Sylvii	lagus a:	· dumore
Sample Period	1971	1972	1971	1972	
		Jornada			
May	43.8	30.1	5.0	2.1	
July	29.7	26.2	4.0		
August	69.5	35.0	3.4	3.7	
November	60.8	40.3	2.6	4.9	
	- 	Pantex	.1		
June	48.1>	40.2	6.39	4.3	
August	42.60	45.0	2.32	1.1	
October	44.59	40.9	4.85	3.5	
	41.10	42,03	4,53		7

POPULATION DYNAMICS AND BIOMASS ASSAY

Jornada Site

Based on live-trapping results, estimates of density of the rodent population showed a slight increase from the low points reached in August and November 1971. Populations reached highs in May 1972 when an estimated 32 individuals resided on the live-trap plot and again in November with 27 on the plot (see Fig. 1 for 3-year trends in populations). Similar patterns to 1971 of higher densities in spring and early summer after recruitment (particularly of heteromyids) followed by lows in late summer were detected in 1972. The most notable aspect of the population was the appearance of some numbers of *Perognathus apache* in the spring that persisted into late summer.

In the November sample, most adult female *D. ordii* and *D. spectabilis* captured on the live-trap grid were either in breeding condition or pregnant. This late recruitment may have been in response to increased precipitation in late summer and early autumn and the subsequent accelerated growth of vegetation. The possibility of a marked increase in 1973 in the population was good.

Pantex Site

Populations of rodents on the live-trap plot continued at high density following the November 1971 increase. A total of 93 rodents were estimated to be present in the area in May 1972. This number decreased throughout the year with 64 estimated as residing in the area in November 1972 (see Fig. 2).

The most notable change of composition of the rodent fauna was the large increase in numbers of cotton rats, Sigmodon hispidus. The late summer and autumn rains in 1971 coupled with a moist and mild winter in

100

PANTEX



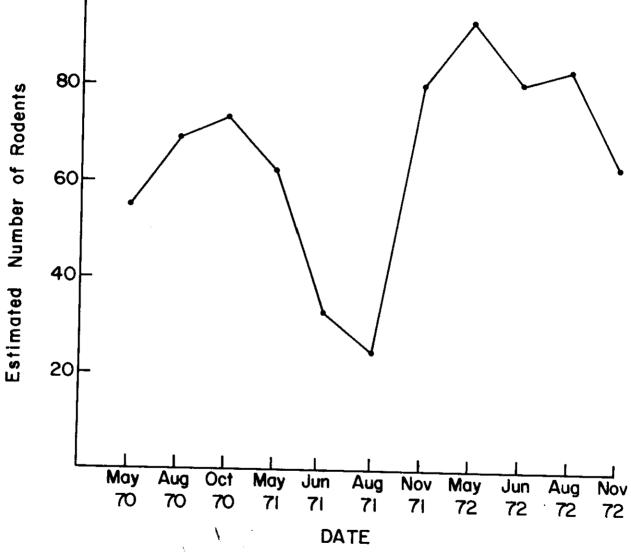


Fig. 2. Changes in density of the rodent population over a 3-year period at Pantex. Numbers on the ordinate represent the estimated (using a modified Zippin analysis) number of rodents, all species, present on the study plot.

1971-1972 produced dense vegetation and cover on the study plot. Cotton rats became the most important species, in terms of biomass, in the spring and summer of 1972. Runways of cotton rats were in evidence over the entire study plot. However, by autumn the number of cotton rats had decreased considerably. The vegetation had also undergone considerable drying in this period which was seemingly coupled with decreased precipitation.

The compositional changes in the rodent fauna as detected by our live-trapping results seem to be correlated with changes in vegetation density (as a result of precipitation patterns) and cessation of grazing, permitting plant successional stages to proceed. The rodent fauna species shifts could be those predictable on the basis of ecological succession. Precipitation seems the most important driving variable to the rodent population.

SACRIFICE TRAPPING PROGRAM

Small mammals (rodents and lagomorphs) were collected by snap-trapping and shooting on both sites. No lagomorphs were collected from the Pantex Site owing to the problems created by free-ranging cattle and the use of guns. The results of the collecting program are found in Table 5. Materials collected were preserved mostly as entire specimens in Formalin. All measurements, weights, and reproductive data were recorded on forms previously used in the 1970-1971 studies. All stomachs were forwarded to the food analysis laboratory at the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory. A total of 125 mammals were collected from the Jornada and 205 were taken from the Pantex Site.

Table 5. Numbers of animals taken by sacrifice trapping and shooting.

Species	May	June	July	November
J	ornada Sit	e		
Dipodomys merriami	19	8	1	1
D. ordii	23	4	8	4
D. spectabilis	3			==
Perognathus penicillatus	8			6
P. apache		1		
P. flavus				3
Onychomys leucogaster	5	1		
Neotoma micropus]
Spermophilus spilosoma	3	4		3
Lepus californicus	6	4		5
Sylvilagus auduboni			1	1
Totals	67	22	11	25
F	antex Site			
Mus musculus	15		7	
Onychomys leucogaster		1	2	
Perognathus flavus			1	
P. hispidus	2			
P. maniculatus	25	20	28	14
Reithrodontomys megalotis	13	10		1
R. montanus		1		4
Sigmodon hispidus	22	18	20	1
Totals	77	50	58	20

SUMMARY

The late autumn 1971 increase in population density and biomass of rodents on the Pantex Site was carried over into the spring of 1972 when biomass reached a peak for the 3-year study. A gradual decline occurred from August 1972 until the sampling period in November. This decline seemed correlated with a late summer-early autumn period of reduced precipitation.

Populations of rodents at the Jornada remained at low densities throughout the 1972 sampling times. Late summer and early autumn rains produced good growth in vegetation, and most adult small mammals livetrapped in November 1972 were in breeding condition portending an increase in the population for 1973.

Lagomorph populations, particularly jackrabbits, were somewhat fewer in numbers at the Jornada whereas they remained about the same at Pantex.

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APPENDIX I

FIELD DATA

Small Mammal Live Trapping, Grids

Small mammal live trapping data collected on the grids at the Jornada and Pantex Sites were recorded on form NREL-10. Jornada data are stored as a part of Grassland Biome Data Set A2U10B8. Pantex data are stored as a part of Grassland Biome Data Set A2U10BA. A sample data form and an example of the data are attached.



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FIELD DATA SHEET - VERTEBRATE - LIVE TRAPPING

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+++ EXAMPLE OF DATA +++

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1010TRM1911725	HENU	3 1 0	0 5 10
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1010TRM2011725	PENA	3 3 1341 0	0 5 6
1010TRM2011725	REME	3 1 0	0 1 8
1010TRM2011725	PEMA	0 3 2125 0	0 8 6
1010TRM2011725	PEMA	0 3 2034 0	0 7 10
1010TRM2011725	REMO	0 3 2130 0	0 5 9
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1010TRM2011725	PEMA	0 3 2120 0	0 7 11
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1010TRM2111725	PEMA	3 1 0	0 12 6
1010TRM2111725	FEMA	3 3 2114 0	0 8 6
1010TRM2111725	REMO	2 3 2135 0	0 8 5
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Small Mammal Live Trapping, Assessment Lines

Small mammal live trapping data collected on assessment lines at the Jornada and Pantex Sites were recorded on form NREL-17. Jornada data are stored as a part of Grassland Biome Data set A2U10B8. Pantex data are stored as a part of Grassland Biome Data set A2U10BA. A sample data form and an example of the data are attached.



GRASSLAND BIOME

U.S. INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGICAL PROGRAM

FIELD DATA SHEET--VERTEBRATE - ASSESSMENT LINES

Deta Type	Site	Initials	<u></u>	Date	, -	Treatment	Replica	Genus		Species	ounspecie	-	Condition	Mark	Number	Male	Female	Weight	Molt	Line Nu	Trap No	Previous Number
			ļ	Month			te	_		μ̈́.	es		g				0	•		Number	Number	Sus
1-2	3-4	5-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14	15	21-2	22 2	3-2	4 2	5 2	7	29	31-34	36	38	40-44	46	49	51-52	54-5
17 Data	Type	<u>.</u>		Condit	ilon			2000000	SS: 53	2000	8 8888	33 (53)	1000-0	900000			6000000					
17 V	'ertel	rate - sment		0 Nor	mal aped pid																	
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Die Die ESA ESA ESA		erate Vy																				
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Suba Juva Adul Suba Juva	adult enile It br adult	breedi breedi eeding breedi breedi	ng? ng? ng																			
male Adul Suba Juve Adul	it, vi adult enile it, vi	ilva ina , vulva , vulva ilva tui	inac: inac: raid	tive tive																		
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+++ EXAMPLE OF DATA +++

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1710TRM241172	SIHI	0	1		Ú		Ü	6	lυ
1710TRM241172	SIHI	0	1		Ü		0	6	10
1710TRM251172	REMO	0	1		0		0	3	11
1710TRM251172	PEMA	0	1		0		Ž	3	10
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1710TRM251172	SIHI	0	1		0		0	7	12
1710TRM251172	REMO	0	1		U		Ü	8	12
1710TRM261172	SIHI	0	1			0	Ü	5	li
1710TRM261172	REMO	0	1			0	0	3	ĺυ
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1710TPM261172	PEMA	0	l		Ü		Ü	5	10
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1710TPM261172	SIHI	2	1			0	0	6	10
1710TRM261172	PEMA	0	1			0	Ú	7	10
1710TRM261172	REMO	0	1			0	0	Н	1 2
1710TRM271172	SIHI	0	1			0	Ü	6	10
1710TPM271172	PEMA	0	1		Ü		Ú	3	10
1710TRM271172	SIHI	0	1			0	U	6	10
1710TRM271172	SIHI	0	1			0	Ü	6	10
1710TRM271172	SIHI	1						6	10
1710TRM271172	REME	0	1			0	U	7	12
1710TPM271172	PEMA	0	1			0	0	7	10
1710TRM271172	PEMA	0	3	5150		0	U	7	10
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