FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — Arkansas dodged the bullet of Asian soybean rust in 2005, but University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture scientists aren’t letting their guard down for 2006.

To meet the threat of soybean rust, the Division of Agriculture established the Asian SoyBean Rust Working Group, a coalition of scientists working in cooperation with the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service the Arkansas State Plant Board, soybean producers and industries.

(more)
The working group is **attacking** the problem along multiple avenues to protect the state’s soybean crop, said plant pathologist **Rick Cartwright.**

Soybean **Rust** is caused by a fast-moving fungus that infects the leaves of soybeans and a few other plants and, if not controlled, can **severely reduce** yields, said plant pathologist **John Rupe.**

Because it requires a **living host,** Asian soybean rust can’t survive **over winter** in Arkansas, Rupe said. “It has a wide range of **hosts,** including kudzu, but all its **hosts** loose their leaves during the winter.”

That **means** soybean rust has to overwinter in warmer climates and blow in on the wind, Rupe said. In 2004, rust arrived in **Ark.** on the winds of hurricane Ivan, but too late to affect the soybean crop. In 2005, it was **found mostly in the** panhandle of Florida and the southern areas of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. It also was **found very late** in the season in some kudzu plants in Kentucky and Texas.

Much of the working **group’s** effort is directed at early detection. **Rube** said **sentinel** plots are planted about a month earlier than the soybean crop.
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