The Nordic Council of Ministers – the official body for Nordic intergovernmental cooperation – adopted in 2006 a strategy plan which included cooperation within Nordic-Baltic veterinary contingency planning. The aim of the plan was to maximize the potential of Nordic/Baltic cooperation and work together to prevent and combat serious contagious animal diseases such as foot and mouth disease, avian influenza, classical swine fever, Newcastle disease and any other animal disease, including zoonoses. The implementation of the plan was taken up by a Nordic-Baltic Veterinary Contingency Group (N-BVCG) which with regard to administrative aspects reports to the Nordic working group for microbiology and animal health/animal welfare. The objectives of the N-BVCG include:

- to improve cooperation, communication and exchange of information and experiences, between the veterinary authorities within the Nordic-Baltic region, in the context of contingency planning and during animal diseases crises
- to increase awareness among professionals and stakeholders within the region regarding animal health threats and emerging diseases

It is vital to detect an exotic animal disease as soon as possible and before it spreads. The activities initiated by the N-BVCG have included attempts to enhance animal health contingency planning taking into account the pre-epidemic phase, the epidemic phase and the post-epidemic phase occurring during disease outbreaks. The activities have in particular been:

- International seminars; the topics have included risk analysis, vector borne diseases, risk based surveillance and contingency planning; wildlife and infectious animal diseases, biosecurity
- International simulation exercises covering the following diseases: foot and mouth disease, bluetongue, West Nile fever, African swine fever and viral haemorrhagic septicaemia
- Workshops covering: Preparation of simulation exercises, animal expert groups, rapid qualitative risk assessments for use in National veterinary administrations and communication.

The aim of the strategy plan adopted in 2006 is still very valid; outbreaks in the Nordic – Baltic region of exotic diseases such as avian influenza, bluetongue and African swine fever has highlighted the importance of up-dated contingency plans and the value of working together at regional level. Future challenges related to contingency planning will be highlighted.